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Advancing the field of decision making and judgement in child welfare and protection

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Book of Abstracts

1–3 September 2021

XVI International EuSARF Conference 2021 – The Perspective of the Child

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XVI International EuSARF Conference 2021

It is with great pleasure that the ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences is hosting the XVI European Scientific Association on Residential & Family Care for Children and Adolescents (EuSARF) Conference in ZURICH, from 1–3 September 2021.

Acknowledging and understanding “The perspective of the child” in practice and research in child and youth welfare has become a core issue for advancing social work. The challenges and opportunities that arise from this fundamental task are the focus of the XVI international EuSARF Conference.

The EuSARF 2021 Conference is organized in partnership with Office for Youth and Career Guidance of the Canton of Zurich, PACH and INTEGRAS.

About the book of abstracts

This book of abstracts features *all* submissions that have been accepted for EuSARF 2021. Of those more than 480 video and poster presentations were uploaded by the authors to the digital conference event space. The videos and presentations are accessible through the event space after registration, until at least 1 August 2022.

More information can be found on the conference website: https://EuSARF2021.ch
EuSARF 2021 digital event space can be accessed here: https://event.EuSARF2020.exordo.com

«The perspective of the child»

In child welfare, child protection, and social work research, there has been an increasing interest in the views of children. This professional and scientific development reflects broader cultural and societal changes. Intergenerational relationships between children and adults and their inherent power structures have become an object of public and scientific scrutiny and were expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, a human rights treaty that asserts the right of *every* child to self-determination, dignity, respect, non-interference, and the right to make informed decisions. In recent decades, the mantle of meeting the daily challenges set forth by this convention has been taken up by practitioners, academics, and governments in the realm of children's services. As a result, acknowledging and understanding the perspective of the child in practice and research has become a core issue for advancing social work. The challenges and opportunities that arise from this fundamental task are the main theme of the XVI international Conference of the European Scientific Association on Residential and Family Care for Children and Adolescents (EuSARF).

Principal Topics

To focus on the perspective of the child requires a wide range of essential processes and tasks. Child-centered research and practice that emphasizes the respect for children's agency and promotes young people`s civil and human rights, is of special interest. Therefore, we make a special call for evaluations of actions, programs and interventions which amplify the voices of children in care and in the child protection system. We encourage contributions that enhance the understanding of children's subjective perspectives or give critical insights into differences between adult and children's social views. These topics can range from the meaningful participation of children in child protection and decision-making processes to everyday life matters and behaviours; from child-centered placement settings and individual arrangements to framing new legislation on child protection and child welfare across the globe; and from exploring and implementing new (research) methods that amplify children's views and voices.

The «Perspective of the Child» during times of Covid-19: All around the world current developments are impactful, controversial and momentous and the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to preoccupy the world. In the resulting concert of opinions and assessments, sound empirical social work knowledge is especially valued and called for in these times. For the EuSARF conference in 2021 we therefore especially welcomed projects that prominently feature empirical science with a focus on the perspectives of children during times of Covid-19.

For all topics, the children's perspectives is examined through discussions centered on the following thematic areas:

Concepts and Approaches

- 1. Historical and theoretical approaches
- 2. Advances in research methodology
- 3. Program evaluation and quality in child welfare
- 4. Assessment and decision making in child welfare and protection
- 5. Knowledge transfer into practice, social work education and training
- 6. Politics and evidence-based policies on childhood, family, growing up and care

Fields of Action

- 7. Prevention and family intervention programs, including home-based and community care
- 8. Residential childcare
- 9. Family foster care and kinship care
- 10. Adoption and postadoption
- 11. Peers and friends
- 12. Family and wider social networks

Focus topics

- 13. Child abuse and neglect, including safeguarding young people in care
- 14. Mental health of children and young people in care
- 15. Education and qualification of children and young people in care
- 16. Transition to adulthood
- 17. Migration and minoritized groups in child welfare
- 18. Anti-oppressive and inclusive practices in care

About the European Scientific Association on Residential and Family Care for Children and Adolescents (EUSARF)

The European Scientific Association on Residential and Family Care for Children and Adolescents (EuSARF) is a body of researchers focusing on child welfare and protection. The board of EUSARF is voluntarily and its members are concerned with the development and dissemination of knowledge in the field of childcare.

EuSARF was founded in 1989 and has its origins in the cooperation between Flemish and Dutch universities. Currently, the EuSARF board is in 15 European countries and includes board members from Israel, the United States of America and Canada.

EuSARF develops scientific research in the field of child and family welfare and promotes the exchange of information between European members and other associations throughout the world. To achieve these goals, EuSARF organizes biennial international conferences and supports international seminars.

EuSARF has strong and long-lasting ties with other international associations of child welfare and child protection researchers, such as the International Association for Outcome-Based Evaluation and Research on Families' and Children's Services (IAOBER), the International Network for Foster Care Research (INFCR), the International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care (INTRAC) and the Association Internationale de Formation et de Recherche en Education Familiale [International Association of Training and Research in Family Education (AIFREF)]. Since the late 1980s, EuSARF has organized multiple international conferences:

1. 1989, November 30 – December 2 | De Haan (Belgium)
   'Innovations in Residential Care'
2. 1991, November 7–9, | Noordwijkerhout (the Netherlands)
   'Social Competence and Social Support'
3. 1993, September 29–October 2 | Lüneburg (Germany)
   'Love Is Not Enough'
4. 1995, September 6–9 | Leuven (Belgium)
   'There Is No Place Like Home. Supporting Children in Need and Their Families'
5. 1996, September 12–14 | London (Great Britain)
   'Action for Children. Linking Research, Practice and Policy across Europe'
6. 1998, September 23–26 | Paris (France)
   'Residential and Foster Care: New Approaches, New Practices'

- 2000, May 10–13 | Maastricht – *in cooperation with FICE*
  'The Century of the Child. Changes in Views on (Residential) Child and Youth Care. Retrospect and Perspectives

7. 2002, September 11–14 | Trondheim (Norway)
   ‘Revitalising Residential and Foster Care: New Horizons in the 21th Century’
8. 2003, April 9–12 | Leuven (Belgium)
   ‘In the Best Interests of the Child: Cross-Cultural Perspectives’
9. 2005, September 21–24| Paris (France)
   ‘Troubled Children in a Troubled World’
10. 2008, March 26–29 | Padova (Italy)
    ‘Assessing the ‘Evidence-Base’ of Intervention for Vulnerable Children and Their Families, Cross National Perspectives and Challenges for Research, Practice and Policy’
11. 2010, September 22–25 | Groningen (the Netherlands)
    ‘How Interventions in Child and Family Care Work. Research and Practice-Based Findings on Interventions Regarding Vulnerable and Troublesome Children and Their Families’
12. 2012, September 3–7 | Glasgow (Scotland)
    ‘All Our Children. Positive Experiences, Successful Outcomes for Looked After and Other Vulnerable Children’
13. 2014, September 2–5 | Copenhagen (Denmark)
    ‘Making a difference’
14. 2016, September 13–16 | Oviedo (Spain)
    ‘Shaping the future’
15. 2018, October 2–5| Porto (Portugal)
    ‘All Children, All Families. Promoting Excellence in Child Welfare Research, Policy and Practice’
16. 2021, September 1–3 | Online conference hosted from Zürich (Switzerland)
    ‘The perspective of the Child’

Table of Contents

Keynote by Doris Bühler-Niederberger: “Lifelong silence - ignoring and denying children’s testimonies”

Keynote Presentation

Prof. Doris Bühler-Niederberger (University of Wuppertal)

In her keynote Doris Bühler-Niederberger speaks about: “Lifelong silence - ignoring and denying children’s testimonies”

Doris Bühler-Niederberger is Professor of Sociology at the University of Wuppertal, Germany. In her research she focuses on the social structuration of processes of growing-up, especially on welfare and educational institutions dealing with childhood and their respective impact. She works towards a more general approach of (social) age as a dimension of social structure and social order in different societies. Recent publications focused on children, youth and violence as well as on age transitions.

Keynote by Emily Keddell: “Systemic responses to intersecting inequities in child protection systems: recognising the embedded child.”

Keynote Presentation

Dr. Emily Keddell (University of Otago)

Children, especially in social work, are too often seen and addressed as separate individuals. Yet many of the issues leading to contact with child protection services are related to wider struggles for justice.
The EuSARF 202 conference also discusses issues of inequities and intersectionality therefore we are delighted to have Prof. Dr. Emily Keddell, an expert on these topics, as a key-note speaker.
Emily Keddell is an Associate Professor in Social and Community Work at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her research focusses on the child protection system, specifically inequalities in system contact, decision-making variability, knowledge interpretation in practice, the use of algorithmic decision tools, and policy analysis. She is currently engaged in a project examining what helps prevent babies being removed from their families of origin.

Emily Keddell is an Associate Professor in Social and Community Work at the University of Otago, New Zealand.

Keynote by Jeroen Dekker: “Looking at Voices of the Child. Ideas, Challenges, and Derailments in the Educational Space of the Past”

Keynote Presentation

Prof. Jeroen Dekker (University of Groningen)

Our current views and ideas about children’s voices can only be fully understood if we are aware of the past they were coming from.
The EuSARF 2021 conference also discusses challenges and developments from an historical perspective, therefore we are delighted to have Prof. Dr. Jeroen Dekker, an expert on these topics, as a keynote speaker.

Dr. Jeroen J.H. Dekker is Honorary Professor of history and theory of education at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. He was visiting fellow at the European University Institute (Florence), Columbia University, Sassari University, and the Max Planck Institute for Human Development (Berlin). He is a former President of ISCHE, Co-Editor-in-Chief of Paedagogica Historica, Visiting Member of the Editorial Board of History of Education, Member of the Advisory Board of Historia y Memoria de la Educación, and of the scientific committee of Annali di storia dell’Educazione e delle Istituzioni Educative Education. From 2016 to 2019 he was at the request of the Dutch government a Member of the Committee for the Study on Institutional Child Abuse. His publications deal with longue durée history of education, childhood, parenting, and children at risk.

Dr Jeroen J.H. Dekker is Honorary Professor of history and theory of education at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands.

Keynote by Sabine Andresen: “Children’s perspectives on vulnerability, needs and well-being in education”

Keynote Presentation

Prof. Sabine Andresen (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main)

The perspective of the children is beside many other the perspective of a so-called vulnerable group in our societies.

The EuSARF 2021 conference also discusses the topic of well-being and vulnerability, and we are delighted to have Prof. Dr. Sabine Andresen, an expert on these topics, as a keynote speaker.

Sabine Andresen is Professor for social pedagogy and family research at the Goethe-University Frankfurt, Germany. Since 2016 she is the head of the national Independent Commission on Child Sexual Abuse. She is one of the PIs of the global study “Children’s Worlds”. And she is a PI of the DFG (German Research Funding Organisation) Graduate School “Doing Transition” together with Tübingen University, 1st funding period 2017–2021. Her research interests are empirical studies on child and family well-being, child sexual abuse in families, narratives of adult survivors of sexual abuse, prevention studies, child poverty and social services, childhood vulnerability.

Keynote by The Change Factory: “Who really knows the perspective of the child?”

Keynote Presentation

Mx. Change Factory (FORANDRINGSFABRIKKEN)

How would children and young people answer the question: “What is the perspective of the child?”

The EuSARF 2021 conference is committed to discuss differing perspectives on children and childhood. One of them is voiced from children and young people and we are delighted to welcome guests from the Change Factory, a non-profit foundation, as keynote speakers.

How the Change Factory (Forandringsfabrikken) describe themselves:

Forandringsfabrikkens, or The Change Factory’s, philosophy is built on a simple idea: Listening to what (young) people in welfare systems think about what is good help, and what should change for the help to feel good and actually help.

Despite Norway’s welfare system being widely recognised, The Change Factory experience little opportunity for young people’s voice to be heard when placed in institutions such as schools, child care, mental health care and more. Programmes working with children and youth are often adult-led, so that the design and functioning of public policies and institutions do not consider the opinions of those directly affected.

Children and youths’ knowledge is important for welfare systems to work. But many systems do not have good ways to gather this knowledge and use it for development.

The Change Factory aims to get young people to identify system-changing ideas, build consensus around them, and open direct communication between service users and implementing agencies to create real change.

In order to allow effective engagement between young users of services and the state, we treat young people as experts (or, as we call them, Pro’s), gathering and amplifying their knowledge to finally reach influential adults. Children are empowered to act as lobbyists that push for the shifts they suggest. The ultimate goal is to teach public institutions a proven way to listen to children in a respectful way.

Keynote by Thomas Gabriel: “The Perspective of the Child”

Keynote Presentation

Prof. Thomas Gabriel (ZHAW Institute for Childhood, Youth and Family)

Thomas Gabriel’s keynote gives us a thematic introduction to the topic of congress and its possible meanings for research and practice in child and youth care.

Thomas Gabriel is director of the Institute of Childhood, Youth and Family at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Switzerland. His research focuses on child and youth care, especially on the history of residential care, foster care, adoption and leaving care. Among other projects, he is currently conducting research financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation on “Domestic Adoption in Switzerland: continuities, changes, and outcomes of irreversible family placements in the 20th and 21st centuries” and he is part of the Swiss research team of “Children’s Worlds” an internationally coordinated study on child well-being.
Thomas Gabriel is director of the Institute of Childhood, Youth and Family at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Switzerland.

Keynote by Urszula Markowska-Manista: “Between two pandemics: Janusz Korczak and children’s rights from the child perspective”

Keynote Presentation

Prof. Urszula Markowska-Manista (University of Warsaw)

When we think about the perspective of children, we also think of children’s rights.

One of the most important pioneers of children’s rights was the polish paediatrician and educator Janusz Korzcak. We are delighted to have Prof. Dr. Urszula Markowska-Manista, a Korczak expert among our keynote speakers at Eusarf 2021 Conference.

Urszula Markowska-Manista is field researcher in education in culturally diversified environments and indigenous childhood and youth studies concerning children’s rights. Since 2016, she has been the director of and lecturer in the MA Childhood Studies and Children’s Rights (MACR) and is assistant professor at the University of Warsaw, Poland. She was acting chairholder of the UNESCO Janusz Korczak Chair at the M. Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw (2017-18) and has conducted extensive field research in Central Africa, the South Caucasus and Central Europe.

Urszula Markowska-Manista is field researcher in education in culturally diversified environments and indigenous childhood and youth studies concerning children’s rights.

“Am I safe here?” International research on youth and staff perspectives on safety in residential care - Father Support and Adjustment Difficulties Among Youth in Residential Care: The Role of Peer Victimization and Gender

Prof. Shalhevet Attar-Schwartz (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Mrs. Adi Fridman-Teutsch (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Dr. Mary Rautkis

Father support of young people living in out-of-home settings is a neglected area of research. The study examines the moderating role of peer victimization in the association between father support and adjustment difficulties among male and female adolescents in residential care settings. Using random cluster sampling, the study includes the reports of 1,409 young people, in grades 8 to 12, residing in 16 Israeli educational residential care settings designed for youth from underprivileged backgrounds. The findings show that, on average, fathers are highly involved in these young people’s lives. They also show that male adolescents, adolescents whose parents are married, Israeli-born adolescents, and those whose fathers have higher education levels have higher levels of father support. Father support is negatively associated with adjustment difficulties. A significant interaction was found between peer victimization, father support and gender in predicting adjustment difficulties. Among boys who had experienced peer victimization at any point during their lives, the findings show a significant negative association between father support and adjustment difficulties. For boys who had never experienced peer victimization, the association was statistically insignificant. For girls, the picture revealed is different; for those who had experienced peer victimization, the level of father support was insignificantly linked with adjustment difficulties. For girls who had never experienced peer victimization, there was a significant association between increased father support and reduced adjustment difficulties. These findings shed light on ways in which father support is beneficial to young people in residential care, with implications for child welfare and education professionals.

“Children’s understandings of vulnerability and well-being – a global perspective on qualitative research (methods/-findings)” - Taking visual data seriously, taking young children’s perspective seriously?

Dr. Samuel Keller (Zurich)

Objective

The environment of growing up (“Environment”) represents a central dimension of the conception of “Child-Well-Being”. Nevertheless, we hardly know anything about when, why, how and where meanings arise for children in their environments. This gap is particularly evident, for example, in the research discourse on adoption, since this field, which tends to be structural-functionalist, can certainly be regarded as a “burning glass” of educational challenges. The aim of this presentation is therefore to methodologically substantiate a visually based approach to the perspective of young adopted children. This should enable us to empirically learn more about relevant dimensions of meaning in “Environments”.

However, the requirement to close the gap mentioned must be seen as high: An appropriate consideration of the perspective of children in research should neither trivialize childhood nor overemphasize the subject. Above all, the ‘new childhood studies’ (Eßer 2017) refers to the methodologically presuppositional, since also contradictory, project to approach places and things empirically that can be grasped in relational terms. Children of pre-school age even face further challenges in terms of communication. Too often, directive, language-based or deficit-oriented methods fail to have the power and self-will of this age group. However, alternative survey methods are (still) not methodologically sound (Lange & Mierendorff 2009) and too often satisfy themselves in a sentimentalising way. They therefore require an explorative and at the same time well-founded approach.

Method

This presentation examines the possibilities and limitations of visual methodology in the specific field of photography survey and analysis. As a database, 17 adopted pre-school children recorded their environments of growing up photographically on a total of 211 pictures. The iconological-iconic approach is intended to make previously unknown experiential qualities recognizable, or to make already known qualities visible and perceptible.

The methodology behind this visual approach deals with four different theoretical turns: with a critical reflection of research of childhood or research with children (’new childhood studies’), with the phenomenological (’turn of sociology towards everyday life’) and - in addition - with the praxeological (’practice turn’) understanding of the world and subject, as well as with the pictorial as empirical data basis in social sciences (’iconic turn’).

Results

The overarching visual analysis of the children’s photographs reveals three dimensions central to Child-Well-Being in the environment of growing up. Along these dimensions ‘environment’ can be differentiated, theoretically discussed and located between ‘my cosmos’, ‘my possibilities’ and ‘our places’. These dimensions are each defined between the same five characteristics, which are mutually dependent and together allow for a relational - rather than determined, absolute and static - relationship between children, relevant places and things:

- *Occurrence in things and places (as a person)*
- *Mobility and localization of things and places*
- *Level of own impact on and determination about things and places*
- *Possibility for retreat, rest, intimacy, immersion*

- *degree of responsibility and accountability development*

Conclusions

In addition to the findings on child-well-beeing and environment, the study also comes to an urgent recommendation for research with young children: despite or rather because of the uncertainties, we should place more trust in visual data; thanks to this we also can place more trust in one dimension of approximation of young children's perspective in research. On the other hand, the text-based premises of widespread research methods and the intellectuality of the research subjects could be less trusted. In order to achieve this, however, a comprehensible methodological elaboration that can be discussed and criticized with reference to the respective interests of knowledge will always remain necessary.

“This area is only for the family” - Ethnographic findings on the living of young people in family-analogous forms of care

Dr. Maximilian Schäfer (Universität Osnabrück)

In the 1970s, family-analogous forms of care were developed in the Federal Republic of Germany which are an established type of care available nationwide today. They are characterized by externally accommodated young people living together with pedagogically qualified caregivers and often also other relatives in one household. Family-analogous forms of care are conceptual hybrids which combine elements of foster care and residential care, making the claim to be both, familial and professional. Even if these forms of placement are widespread in Germany, everyday action has only been comparatively rarely investigated empirically. There is particularly little empirical knowledge of how people arrange their joint spatial living in family-analogous forms of care (Marmann 2005). However, since living together is a core component of these forms of care, there are a number of pedagogically important questions connected with it: How do the protagonists of these arrangements actually live together and what are the consequences of specific living modes? Which rights of movement and access do young people in out-of-home care have in their place of life and residence? Are accommodated young people allowed to use all rooms in a residential building, or only certain areas? Do they have the same rights of movement and access as other residents in their everyday life, or are they assigned a special status in their home? The presentation deals with these questions and sheds light on the (im)possibilities of residential appropriation of young people placed in these arrangements by discussing selected findings of an ethnographic study. In this study, everyday life in family-analogous forms of care in Germany was studied through participant observation for two years (Schäfer and Thole 2018; Schäfer 2019; 2020; 2021). The presentation will show different types of family-analogous living modes, various possibilities of inclusion and exclusion of young people from the private lives of their caregivers and multiple levels of autonomy and heteronomy of accommodated children concerning the utilization of living space within their homes. While previous recommendations for spatial coexistence in family-analogous arrangements have been formulated from the perspective of professionals (e.g. Merchel 2010), this presentation highlights the perspective of accommodated young people.

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”Transnational Families and Transnational Care – New Challenges for Child Beyond Common Material Indicators: Refugee Youth and Families in Transition, Opportunities and Vulnerabilities

Prof. Sahar Almakhamreh (German Jordanian University)

Jordan has been hosting refugees since 1948, just shortly after it was established in 1946. To date, 30% of its population of 10 million are refugees from Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Sudan and Somalia (DOS, 2019). With the Syrian crises occurring at its borders, the largest influx of refugees to Jordan began in 2011. Many remain in Jordan, and this is expected to be a protracted situation (UNRWA, 2019, UNHCR and UNDP, 2017- 2018; Al-Makhamreh, and Hutchinson, 2018). As such, it is important for professionals, academics, researchers, and policy makers to adopt a sustainable development approach rather than continue to work on the basis of a ‘crisis situation.’

The vast majority of Syrian refugees in Jordan (83%) are in host communities (versus 17% in designated refugee camps). Half of registered Syrian refugees are estimated to be minors. Being a developing country, Jordan has been struggling with overcoming socio-economic challenges including rates of high youth unemployment given that 70% of its population are under the age of 30 (DOS, 2018) The latest influx of refugees exacerbated already existing challenges, particularly in terms of educational, health and welfare services. Additionally, the dynamics of displacement amongst the Syrian refugee population are challenging the normative structure and dynamics of families, particularly within their own community. The fact that the situation is one that is protracted, combined with an already struggling welfare system and the changing dynamics within Syrian families calls for a better understanding of how to address such changes, especially with youth and families in the broader Jordanian context. For example, how has the traditional meaning of ‘collective culture responsibilities’ changed? Within these dynamics, how has the notion of loyalty to family and shared responsibilities between the family’s role towards its children, and expected duties of children towards their elders shifted? How are these shifts influencing family unity and identity? And what implications do these changes have on practice and policy? In-depth understanding of these major changes is vitally important for humanitarian and social workers. Practitioners are in need of this knowledge in order to adequately support youth and families and to contribute to ‘healthy relational factors’ between Jordanians and Syrian refugees within host communities. The challenge for practice calls for professional intervention that utilizes a new mode of ‘cultural sensitivity.’ Because of multiple dynamics within host communities, practitioners are now in a position where there needs to be a focus on fostering a sense of belonging and promoting psychological security.

Moreover, many Syrian refugee households are now headed by women. Thus, these new forms of gender roles are an additional layer that practitioners must contend with. With increased independence of women because of the need to survive, these new roles are challenging the status quo that typically favor males over females and shift the meaning of gender agency within patriarchal socialization.

These major shifts call for further developing traditional intervention methods, such as such as strength, family, community and refugee-based approaches. Measuring successful interventions and social cohesion need to move beyond common material indicators, such as achieving actives and economic benefits.

While working with youth and families within these difficult and new dynamics are challenging for practitioners and policy makers alike, they nonetheless provide great opportunities to learn from the resilience of refugees and host communities, and certainly, these dynamics are an opportunity for closer collaboration between professionals, academics and policy makers, both locally and internationally, to better understand how to best serve youth and families in transition

“Transnational Families and Transnational Care – Transnational child protection in the Greater Region”

Ms. Bettina Diwersy (Landesamt für Soziales im Saarland), Mr. Laurent Nisen (University of Liege), Mr. Thibaut Jaquinet (Henallux), Mr. Anne Fernandes (University of Lorraine)

Bettina Diwersy (Universität, Laurent Nisen (University Liege), Thibaut Jaquinet (Hennalux), Anne Fernandes (University of Lorraine)

Social work practices extend nation-state borders on a regular basis. In the area of child protection, transborder practices occur if families are living a transnational way of life or if child protection and child care professionals lack (adequate) services for children and families within their own child and youth care system. This can be the case, for example, if a specific need can no longer be met within existing child and youth care structures or if it seems more sensible to take advantage of child and youth care services in another country for socio-educational reasons.

In these cross-border processes, different child protection systems with culturally influenced and institutionally shaped ideas of childhood, family and parenting meet each other, but also different organisational and professional cultures (Balzani et al., 2015). It becomes clear that the narrow focus on the child protection system of one country does not correspond to the transnational life of many addressees and their need for help. The consequences can be discontinuities in the support of children and their families, disruptions in the care provided or a neglect of children’s rights. The phenomenon of cross-border child protection shows that the exclusive orientation towards the nation state as the quasi natural ordering principle of the social world (Köngeter, 2009, p. 340) and thus also the framing of child protection is no longer adequate. The development of a transnational approach is therefore necessary (Pries, 2001).

Transnational practices in the field of child protection have been little researched to date. The Interreg project EUR&QUA (2017-2020) involve nineteen university and practice organisations and investigates transnational child protection within the Greater Region (Lorraine in the French region Grand Est, the Provinces of Liege and Luxemburg in Wallonia, the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and OstBelgien in Belgium, Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany as well as the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg). By analysing and comparing the institutional frameworks of child protection in the individual countries of the Greater Region, the first step is to reveal commonalities and differences in terms of legal regulations, responsibilities and procedures. In a second step, professional experts who are involved in cross-border child protection as well as the affected families themselves are interviewed about their experiences. Based on case analyses, professional practices and practices of families are analysed. In particular, the project aims at learning from the experiences of affected families and children, analysing their involvement in the organisation and implementation of protection processes and child care services and how far children’s and parents’ rights are guaranteed across borders.

In this paper we present first results showing that transnational child protection processes are associated with many uncertainties and challenges, not only for professionals but also for families and that many things remain uncertain even after child care services have started in another country. This findings will be exemplified by giving insights into case studies which reveal possible chances and risks of transnational child protection cases. The paper concludes with challenges and perspectives which result from this research and practice project for the future organisation of cross-border aid processes.

eur&qua.com

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#CareConvos: an online community to share perspectives on, and experiences of, care

Ms. Rosie Canning (University of Oxford), Dr. Aoife O'Higgins (Magdalen College Oxford)

Background:

The call for more engagement between research and practice forms the background of #CareConvos, a knowledge exchange project. Many people, those that work with children in care in any capacity, and those that were once in the system, want to engage in change. Social media can be harnessed as a critical tool for engagement. Twitter is a popular platform with academics and care experienced people. Using Twitter as a platform can enable the creation of a community to promote important, open discussions and to share perspectives on and experiences of childhoods in care. This method gives meaningful engagement and equal voice and power to those with lived experience.

Objectives:

- To set up an online community where expertise about the care system is shared. The intended audience for the project is broad and includes: care experienced children and adults, foster and kinship carers, social workers, virtual schools, residential care workers, researchers and others.
- To host monthly conversations on twitter
- To co-create knowledge with the care community and generate new ways of working together.
- Ultimately, we hope to suggest strategies for more engaged research.

Method:

Every first Monday of the month, #CareConvos chat takes place on Twitter. #CareConvos are hosted by a team of researchers and experts with lived experience. We facilitate discussions about care and how young people's experiences of care can be improved. So far, we've discussed education, research engagement, language, relationships, transitions and achievements. We use prompts to engage people in conversation.

The course of the conversation is guided by the topics and questions we suggest, but what people share is never re-interpreted or summarised or paraphrased for another audience or context. This means that care experienced voices are heard above others and they continue to resonate far beyond the #CareConvos hour. The data we collect about what #CareConvos means to other people will inform where we go next.

More recently we have invited care experienced people to host #CareConvos, this involves choosing a topic, setting questions and facilitating the conversation with our support.

We plan to survey participants using an online questionnaire about their experiences of #CareConvos, including how this has changed their personal views and/or professional practice.

Findings:

#CareConvos privileges the voices of people with lived experience of care. This is a critical element of its current success. People with experience of care share their knowledge and expertise and they are afforded the space and platform to do this.

#CareConvos has created a space for collective conversations about change. #CareConvos creates a community of people who want to improve the lives of children in care.

We plan to disseminate our survey in April and propose to present these findings at the conference.

Discussion:

In this presentation, we will discuss how the project was set up, its evolution, the findings from our survey and what we see as its potential for future work. We will also live tweet the presentation and invite the audience to take part, to demonstrate how #CareConvos works in real time.

‘There’s nae appeal system’: Findings on the risk of paternal erasure from a Scottish study of pre-birth child protection

Dr. Ariane Critchley (Edinburgh Napier University)

The child protection system in the UK has been highly pre-occupied with risks to infants and very young children over the last decade. Yet in social work, a lack of rigour and a theoretical vacuum around child protection in the peri-natal period is discernible. This vacuum has largely been filled by sources of evidence which focus narrowly on intra-familial risk factors, beginning from conception or even earlier (Critchley, 2020). This narrow perspective fails to recognise that unborn babies have developing identities and family relationships that precede birth: infants are not empty risk bearers.

Drawing on data arising from an ethnographic study of pre-birth child protection, this paper specifically considers the relationship that the fathers who participated in the research had with their expected babies. Fathers shared a range of feelings about their children and role in the context of research interviews and observations. Yet social workers often focused on the risks that the fathers posed. This focus on risk led professionals to ignore or exclude fathers in significant ways. Fathers were denied opportunities to take an active role in their families and care planning for their infants. The professional gaze was trained firmly on the mothers. Children meanwhile were potentially denied the relationship, care and identity benefits of involving their fathers.

Bringing a human rights lens to this finding, the author considers whether there has been a failure in practice and policy to recognise the legal precarity of pre-birth child protection work. Using examples from the data, a series of provocations will be offered on the dangers of men being written out of their children’s lives before they are even born. The exclusion of fathers from child welfare work continues to be a problem for social work. Despite repeated calls for change based on research evidence and serious case reviews (Brandon et al, 2009; Mykkänen at el. 2017; Scourfield, 2006; Philip et al., 2019). In this paper, the author argues that there is a failure of imagination at the root of this problem. A failure to value ‘whole-family working’ (Gřundělová and Stanková, 2019) and to appreciate the depth of the paternal relationship. As a result, men are denied the opportunity to ‘do family’ (Macht, 2019) in important ways. From children’s perspective, this has important implications in terms of their family relationships and identity needs.

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‘Trust me on this one’: The explanatory value of Epistemic Trust Theory in a single foster care case study

Ms. Eva A Sprecher (University College London)

Background

Epistemic trust refers to the ability of individuals to consider knowledge communicated to them by others as important, relevant and generalizable to their own lives. This capacity has recently been hypothesised as essential for functioning effectively in our complex social world and it is suggested that disruptions in epistemic trust are associated with levels of generalised psychopathology (Fonagy et al. 2015). There is emerging evidence that disruptions in epistemic trust may mediate the relationship between early adversity and mental health symptoms later in life (Campbell et al. in press). Young people in foster care frequently have had early experiences of neglect, abuse and trauma that may impact upon their ability to develop appropriate trusting relationships with others, which may have long-term consequences for their wellbeing. Relationships with foster carers may provide an opportunity for a recovery of epistemic trust in these young people which may buffer against poor longer-term mental health outcomes.

Study Research Aims

The primary aim of this paper was to explore the explanatory value of epistemic trust in elucidating the development, dynamics and experience of a fostering relationship. A further aim of this paper is to complexify the novel application of epistemic trust theory to a developmental and therapeutic testing ground and develop knowledge about the connection between epistemic trust and other factors such as interpersonal trust.

Methodology

This paper examines a single case study of a UK-based foster care dyad, an experienced foster carer and an adolescent young person in his care. This dyad was selected from a wider sample in a previous study as both the foster carer and young person subjectively experienced the development of trust as a salient feature of their relationship and a key driver of psychological transformation for the young person.

This study made use of Edelson’s (1986) qualitative single-case study approach for examining psychoanalytic cases to test empirical generalisations or theories. This robust qualitative framework involves a-priori specification of expected observations if a theory, in this case epistemic trust, were to be evidenced or not by this case. Following this, an interrogation the facts of a case sought to establish the explanatory value of epistemic trust theory before explaining any unexpected observations through alternative accounts or complexifications of the existing theory.

Results

The findings of this study were divided into four areas where the explanatory value of epistemic trust could be assessed: 1. Presentation of the young person at the start of the fostering relationship 2. Interaction between caregiving and trusting orientation over time 3. Impacts of changes to trusting orientation 4. Impact of areas of persistence in trusting orientation. Across all these areas, there is evidence that epistemic trust theories are able to account for several key features of the case - for example the young person’s mistrustful presentation at the start of the fostering relationship and the impact of contingent caregiving on developing trust over time. However, epistemic trust theory may be unable to account for some of the experientially important features of this case that may be better explained by development of attachment bonds. These findings also allow for a complexification of epistemic trust theory, for example through consideration of the relational nature of epistemic trust.

Conclusions

This single case study of a fostering dyad demonstrates how the theory of epistemic trust has meaningful explanatory value in elucidating how development of trusting fostering relationships facilitates personal change for young people in foster care. This study highlights the importance of investigating the role of epistemic and interpersonal trust in fostering relationships as a path to recovery from early adversity and highlights future areas for theory development.

(Mis)Understandings between young people and professionals in residential care

Mrs. Andrea Ćosić (Research and Teaching Assistant), Prof. Ivana Borić (University of Za), Ms. Ivana Gazilj (Master of Social Pedagogy)

Good-quality residential care requires continuous reflections from all participants – young people in care, professionals, scientists, and other stakeholders. A deeper understanding of all these perspectives, especially how young people and professionals perceive treatment, can bring important insights. Therefore, this research aimed to explore how young people and professionals perceive residential care. Research questions were focused on exploring the experience of care and its elements as well as recommendation for improvement. The qualitative approach was used. Data were collected through focus groups with young people living in two residential homes in Croatia and professionals working in these institutions. Results show that young people describe the experience in care in a generally negative way, highlighting inappropriate living conditions, lack of meaningful relationships with professionals, low level of participation in care, and presence of many different behavior problems. From a professional's perspective, care is described as a wide range of interventions without any specific theoretical background. Professionals verbalize that working in residential care is challenging because of multiple and complex needs of children, insufficient number of staff and lack of cooperation with other institutions and community. Comparison between two perspectives shows that young people and professionals do not share a common understanding of care and interventions: young people tend to be more critical more explicit in their call for a meaningful relationships with professionals. On the other hand, professionals are more skeptical and place the responsibility for low quality of interventions on other stakeholders.

- The added value of prioritising children’s and young people’s perspectives in research (Symposium title). Young people leaving care with intellectual disabilities or mental health problems: an evaluation program (abstract title) title)

Dr. Carme Montserrat (University of Girona), Dr. Gemma Crous (University of Barcelona)

Chair (Symposium): Dr Nikki Luke, Research Fellow, Rees Centre, University of Oxford: nikki.luke@education.ox.ac.uk

Background: Ageing out of the child protection system involves many difficulties for youth leaving care. Care leavers with intellectual disabilities or mental health problems are at even greater risk. Although some studies point out that the number of care leavers with intellectual disabilities and/or mental health problems is much higher than that of young people who have not been in care, studies focusing on this population are still scarce and a gap exists in the scientific literature. Furthermore, few studies have explored the opinions and perceptions of the population of care leavers with intellectual disabilities

Objectives: Within the framework of an evaluation of a new program directed at care leavers with intellectual disabilities or mental health problems, the aim of this study is to know how both care leavers and social service workers evaluate the transition to emancipation. This study is aimed at understanding the factors that facilitate and hinder their process of emancipation within this program in order to make the necessary changes.

Method: Using qualitative research methods, interviews were conducted with 14 youngsters aged 18-21 living in specifically designed supported housing and 16 social educators working with them.

Findings: On one hand, results indicated that both youngsters and educators were highly satisfied with the housing program. For the care leavers, it was an opportunity adapted to their circumstances; they spoke of personal growth and receiving support to meet their needs. However, weaknesses, dilemmas and challenges were also discussed, such as the temporary nature of the program and the type of support available on leaving, or the dependence of these young people on their educators and the feeling to be in a special track.

Conclusions and implications: The evaluation of a new program from the beginning with the involvement of youngsters, professionals and policy makers is a good first step towards the quality of the child protection system.

The Project was approved by the Ethics and Bio-Safety Research Committee of the University (CEBRU0004-2019) carried out with the collaboration aft the Catalan Government and funded by SM Foundation.

1Family1Plan: the added value of a method for integrated and participative care

Dr. Rob Gilsing (The Hague University of Applied Sciences), Dr. Lineke van Hal (HAN University of Applied Sciences), Ms. Marlinda van der Hoff (Verwey-Jonker Institute)

Introduction

The method 1Family1Plan (1F1P) aims to support families with multiple problems by involving them actively in the organization of their care. They decide on the aims, the actual interventions and the professionals and organizations to be involved, supported by a coordinating youth care professional. Furthermore, 1F1P builds on strengths of family members, on matters going well and on resources in their social network. All professionally and non-professionally involved work together on one plan, in an integrated, systematic and purposive way. 1F1P is broadly implemented in several Dutch regions.

Aim and methods

What is the added value of 1F1P, compared to other, more regular methods? Our study focused on this question. More specific, we focused on the results for families regarding their self-reliance and resilience, on the degree to which they had a voice in their care, and on the coordination of care. The study was done in three regions using 1F1P for several years and consisted mainly of multiple (24) case studies. For each case, we analyzed client registration files and conducted interviews with the most involved professional and with parents, sometimes together with children (age dependent). Furthermore, we twice set out a digital questionnaire amongst all professionals working with 1F1P in the three regions. Lastly, we discussed our findings on the added value of 1F1P in so called reflection meetings with professionals in the three regions.

Results

Our study strongly indicates that living up to the core elements of 1F1P – strong voice of families, coordination of care activities - contributes to strengthening self-reliance and resilience of families. There is a strong consensus amongst professionals on this point. However, the realization of these core elements is sometimes impeded by professionals from organizations that are not very familiar with (core elements of) 1F1P. They have different views on the extent to which families should have a say or on the necessity of care coordination.

Professionals do not automatically put families in charge of their care. Doing this requires the strong conviction that this is the best thing to do. Nor all professionals, neither all families share this conviction. Giving families a voice requires a facilitating attitude, especially from care coordinating professionals. It also asks for a customized approach, because the capabilities of organizing and being responsible for their own care vary between and within families, depending on their resources (including network) and the problems they have to deal with. Diverging visions on the family situation between families and professionals, or divergent views on goals to be set, impedes customizing the ‘having a voice’ axiom. We found this specifically when wellbeing and/or safety of children were at stake. On the contrary, a positive approach and equality contribute to customizing ‘having a voice’.

Care coordination is required for good cooperation. In general, professionals judge positive on interprofessional cooperation when working according to 1F1P. However, professionals greatly vary in their judgments on cooperation with families. Furthermore, the case studies point out that cooperation between professionals sometimes is suboptimal. The particular 1F1P instrument of roundtables contributes to coordination between professionals and with families. Roundtables are periodically held meetings, where all involved professionals, the family and possibly network members discuss the progress being made, hold each other accountable for their share and eventually adjust the family plan. Transparency and a facilitating chair are contributing factors, whereas consults without family participation and too many roundtable participants impede good coordination.

Finally, we found that 1F1P appeals to the attitude and competences of all involved: family members, care coordinator, other professionals and social network.

A case file review of sibling relationships and contact for children adopted from out-of-home care in NSW, Australia

Dr. Betty Luu (The University of Sydney), Dr. Amy Conley Wright (The University of Sydney), Prof. Judith Cashmore (The University of Sydney), Ms. Peiling Kong (The University of Sydney)

Objectives: Relationships with siblings can be one of the most important and enduring connections for children in out-of-home care. Despite limited research, there is clear recognition of the value of maintaining sibling connections when it is in a child's best interests. In Australia, all domestic adoptions are expected to be open: there is an expectation of regular post-adoption contact with birth parents, siblings, grandparents and other extended family members when it is determined to be safe and in the best interests of children. Unlike many countries, however, face-to-face contact for adoptions from care in Australia, particularly in the state of New South Wales (NSW), is highly prioritised. In NSW, an 'adoption plan' is submitted with the court order and specifies the nature and frequency of post-adoption contact children will have with birth family members, including siblings, and can be made legally enforceable. This presentation describes the nature and complexity of the sibling networks of children adopted from care, and outlines factors that relate to how decisions about post-adoption contact are made.

Method: A case file analysis was conducted of the 89 applications of 117 children whose adoptions were finalised by the NSW Supreme Court in 2017; 80 of these cases involved children with siblings who lived elsewhere and were not part of the adoption order. De-identified information about children's and siblings' characteristics, living situations, contact arrangements and relationships were extracted. The data also includes, where possible, their views of the adoption and post-adoption contact.

*Results:*Including all full, maternal and paternal siblings, the average size of sibling groups is about 5.8, with a mean age gap of 12.5 years between the oldest sibling and the adopted child. Siblings of children adopted from out-of-home care tend to be older and have also been subject to child protection proceedings and placement into out-of-home care. Children are more often familiar with full siblings, less familiar with maternal siblings, and many have never met their paternal siblings. The relationships established prior to an adoption order tend to affect expectations for post-adoption contact. The views of children, adoptive and birth families are also considered in decision-making and highlight the important bonds between children and their siblings.

Conclusions: These complexities present challenges for keeping children connected to siblings. Given the protective effect and beneficial outcomes that are known when children live with their siblings in out-of-home care, it is important that sibling co-placement is carried out wherever possible. Where co-placement is not possible, frequency and regularity of contact is important for promoting relationships between siblings separated as a result of being placed in care. The sibling networks of children in out-of-home care are distinct from the general population in their size, composition and family dynamics. Hence, it is critical that adequate resources are available to support children and their families with establishing and maintaining relationships.

A Childs' Right to Family Life when placed in Public Care; Is Norwegian practice in Systematic Contradiction to Human Rights?

Mrs. Tina Gerdts-Andresen (Østfold University College)

Introduction: Since September 2019, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Norway has violated article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in four cases. In all cases, Norway violated the parent's and child's right to family life by the restrictions on contact between the child and its parents after the care order was issued. The question that arises is if the four cases where the Court found Norway to violate the rights to family life is to be understood as single cases or if there is an ongoing systematic contradiction between the conventional rights and Norwegian Welfare practice. This study aimed to clarify whether the current Norwegian practice is in systematic contradiction to the child's right to family life.

Method: The data were derived from the public register Lovdata, with a selected search period from 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2019. The initial search provided a total of 358 County Social Welfare Board decisions as potentially relevant decisions. All decisions were screened based on abstract and conclusion to identify which decisions concerned placing children in public care, cf. section 4-12 of the Child Welfare Act. This amounted to a total of 94 decisions included for further analysis. Included decisions comprise a total of 117 children, 58 girls, and 59 boys, within 94 families. Document analysis was used for reviewing and evaluating the care orders. Correlation analysis was carried out to explore relationships between the child and parents regulation in contact regarding the child's age, the child's characteristics, the child or parent's special needs, child's reactions related to contact, or the collaborative climate in the case.

Result: All care orders were warranted due to "serious deficiencies in the day-to-day care received by the child" or "serious deficiencies in terms of the personal contact and security needed by a child for his or her age and development." Ninety-four percent of the care orders were defined as long-term placements. Visitation rights between the child and its parents were regulated in all care orders, with a variation from "no contact" to "one afternoon per week, every other weekend and 4 weeks holiday per year". Telephone and social media contact was restricted in 10% of the care orders, involving children aging from 3 to 14. Supervision of visitations was granted in 62% of the cases, with the majority of the children aging from 3 to 16.

There appear no relation between any form of contact regulation and the child's age, the child's characteristics, the child or parent's special needs, child's reactions related to contact, estimated duration of the placement, or the collaborative climate in the case, was found.

Conclusion: Restrictions related to contact rights between the child and its parents appear random both regarding the extent of visitation rights, the need for supervision during visitation rights, and regulation on contact by telephone and social media. Both Supreme Court judgments and the latest legal literature build up under a practice that violates the rights of both parents and children regarding an order of supervision. Restrictions are identically formulated across numbers of cases and are not based on the factual appraisal in the individual case. For children in Norway to achieve their rights to family life after they are placed in public care, there is a need for adjustment on how the Board utilizes the child's right to family life when defining restrictions on the child's right to "personal relations and direct contact with both parents regularly." Alternatively, the documentation must be made clearer, visualizing that the care orders are in line with the child's need for the actual protection.

A longitudinal investigation of infants and out-of-home care

Dr. Joseph Magruder (UC Berkeley)

Although infants cannot provide their perspective on out-of-home care, foster care placements for infants can be consequential. Research suggests that their path through and beyond the care system is markedly different than the experience for children of any other age group. Studying infants is important because of their unique needs for developmentally-sensitive care and support; because of the theoretical underpinnings of attachment theory; and because the long-term impacts of quality care can be especially pronounced. Prior research examining infants in the care system has typically focused on their first episode in care and outcomes thereafter. This study offers a longitudinal examination of a population-based cohort of infants (n=5,789) born in 2001 who entered care during the first year of life and who were followed through multiple care episodes until age 18.

Objectives:

The study was conducted to examine the long-range permanency outcomes of infants placed in foster care, taking into account the potential for multiple episodes of care over a ten-year period, and the age at which the infant first entered care.

Methods:

This retrospective, descriptive study uses administrative data from a large western U.S. state to examine permanency outcomes for infants placed in care. Children born in 2001 and who were placed in out-of-home care before 12 months of age were included in the analysis. Children's care and permanency experiences (i.e., reunification, guardianship, adoption, or long-term care) were followed until children were 18 years of age. Descriptive and multivariate analyses were conducted to examine the effects of multiple independent variables on the odds of unique permanency outcomes.

Results:

At age 18, half of children (53%) were living in an adoptive home and about one-third (35%) were reunified with a birth parent. Less than one in ten (6%) were in a guardianship placement and less than 3% remained in long-term foster care. At age 18, infants who entered as neonates (less than 29 days of age) were less likely to be in reunification status (27% vs. 43%) and more likely to be adopted (62% vs. 44%) than were infants who entered care after 4 weeks of age. For both groups less than 4% were in care. Some children experienced substantial instability of care arrangements over time.

Conclusions:

Four broad themes emerge from the findings of this study. First, different types of permanency opportunities have different implications for very young children, with some types of permanency offering substantially greater stability for children than others. Second, the large majority of infants placed in out-of-home care achieve permanency; few remain in out-of-home care long-term. Efforts to promote permanency through policy and practice appear to be largely effective for the majority of infants placed in care. Third, examination of longitudinal data that can account for multiple spells in care, tell a different story than data that only examine outcomes following children's first episode in care. These longitudinal, complex analyses suggest that stable reunification is less likely than previously believed, and that adoption occurs with greater frequency. Fourth, the trajectory for infants who enter care as neonates is quite different from that of older infants.

A longitudinal study about care leavers' transitions to adulthood in Catalonia (Spain): preliminary results of the first wave.

Prof. Clara Sanz Escutia (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)), Dr. Laura Arnau Sabatés (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)), Dr. Josefina Sala (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)), Mr. Joan Prat Armadans (FEPA (Federation of Entities with Projects and Supervised Apartments) - Fundació Servei Solidari)

Aims

Longitudinal studies that analyze care leavers' transition to adulthood provide relevant data to reorient educational intervention and transition support services, as shown by the studies led by Dr.Courtney: the Midwest Study and CALYOUTH.

In Catalonia, several cross-sectional studies about care leavers' transition to adulthood have been carried out (ASJTET, 2011; Montserrat, Casas & Sisteró, 2015; Sala, Villalba, Jariot & Rodríguez 2009; Arnau-Sabatés & Gilligan, 2015). However, they were based on non-probabilistic sampling with some biases and cross-sectional designs that only take into consideration the first years after exiting the welfare system. Thus, the need to monitor the situation of these young people arises.

Consequently, the IARS (Children and Young People at social Risk) research group of the Autonomous University of Barcelona and FEPA (Federation of Entities with Projects and Supervised Apartments), in collaboration with DGAIA (Directorate General for Childhood and Adolescence Care) and ASJTET (the unit of the DGAIA which offers support to care leavers), have initiated a longitudinal study that collects data of young people from the months before they reach the legal age (18 in Spain) to 26 years of age: the CALEAMI project (Care Leavers Moving to Independent Life; www.caleami.org).

The project aims to systematically collect information about the care leavers' transitions to adulthood and analyze the factors that hinder and facilitate their transition by different profiles. These data help obtaining empirical evidence for the improvement of services and programs to support the transition.

This communication presents the preliminary results of the first wave of the longitudinal study from which we are currently collecting data.

Method

The CALEAMI project has a longitudinal design that comprises 4 waves of interviews (at 17, 20, 23 and 26 years of age). For this purpose, a representative sample of supervised youth (N=234) who are in institutional care, family care and in juvenile justice centers has been selected randomly, through probabilistic sampling of simple affixation.

The data will be collected through a face-to-face interview with closed and open questions. The interview was designed with the support of an advisory board of educators, policy workers from the Government and nonprofit organizations of the field, care leavers and researchers. This instrument was validated through cognitive interviews. The first interview (17 years) collects information about the experience of the youth in the protection system and about different areas: education, employment, expectations about the future, preparation for independent living, etc.

Results

The interviews of the first wave of young people leaving the protection system are currently being carried out during this year 2020. The preliminary results of the interviewed youths in the first 6 months will be presented at the EUSARF Conference.

Discussion

The project will allow to provide quality information to the organizations that manage the support resources in order to adjust the programs maximizing their effectiveness. It will also help to understand how young people live the transition process.

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A Longitudinal Study of Educational Outcomes of 15 Consecutive Cohorts of Care Leavers of Educational Residential Facilities in Israel

Prof. Rami Benbenishty (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Prof. Anat Zeira (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Dr. Edna Shimoni (Central Bureau of Statistics), Dr. Netta Achdut (University of Ben Gurion in the Negev)

Background and Purpose:

Multiple countries around the world report that life outcomes of youth aging out of care are much lower compared with their same-age peers. It is important to identify ways in which local contexts shape the differential outcomes for these youths. These contexts include the unique characteristics of each country's child welfare and out-of-home placement, the different circumstances that care leavers meet in the larger society (e.g., employment opportunities), and how placements and the wider society change over the years. The study explores these issues in the context of educational residential facilities (ERF) in Israel, asking: How the population in ERF changes over the years, what are the educational outcomes of graduates compared with the control group and the larger society.

Methods:

This study is based on merging multiple administrative data bases of 15 consecutive cohorts of Israeli young adults (born 1982-1997) a total of 1,565,010. All 44,164 ERF graduates (graduation years 2000-2015) were the research group. The control group was created by propensity score matching based on background data, separately for each cohort, to control for temporal effects. Findings indicate that PSM created two similar groups. Merged data bases included child and family background, education, employment, income, criminal involvement, welfare dependence (of participants and their children). The current presentation focuses on educational achievements.

Findings:

Youth in ERF were different from the larger population in terms of their parent's higher welfare involvement, more criminal activity, and higher proportion of immigrants. Over the years, the ERF population changed. Most noticeable change was the reduction in the immigrant participants in residential placements. In terms of educational outcomes, there was a significant increase in rates of success in high school matriculation tests and college attending in the Israeli society and in ERFs. The magnitude of change in these outcomes was significantly larger for graduates of the educational residential facilities. Nonetheless, although the numbers of educational residential graduates completing matriculation exams has increased (e.g., from 83.4% in 2000 to 95.2% in 2012), their achievements in these exams are consistently below the population average. Relatedly, while more graduates enter higher education, they tend to attend colleges with lower academic demands, rather than more competitive universities, compared with the general population. Overall, the findings indicate that ERF graduates achieve better outcomes compared with the matched control group but significantly worse outcomes compared with the general population in their cohort.

Implications:

The findings indicate that ERFs were able to improve their educational outcomes over the years, in a faster pace than the Israeli society at large. They were also able to surpass the outcomes of similar youth, not in facilities. Nonetheless, there remain significant gaps from the general population in terms of the quality of qualifications and of higher education institutions. This trend should encourage ERFs to continue and 'raise the bar', and present higher expectations, to better compete in today's economy. The high gain-for-investment in improving educational outcomes should encourage the government and corporations to invest in improving

the educational outcomes in ERFs.

A multidisciplinary approach to participation in child protection system: A systematic review

Mr. Arnau Erta Majó (Department of Pedagogy, Universitat de Lleida), Ms. Anna Massons Ribas (Department of Pedagogy, Universitat de Lleida), Ms. Ana B. Domínguez (Department of Pedagogy, Universitat de Lleida), Dr. Eduard Vaquero Tió (Department of Pedagogy, Universitat de Lleida), Dr. M. Àngels Balsells Bailón (Department of Pedagogy, Universitat de Lleida), Dr. NEUS CORTADA (Department of Private Law, Universitat de Lleida)

*Background:*The participation of people involved in foster care and family reunification processes within the child protection system is a major challenge. Nowadays it must be addressed from a multidisciplinary perspective. Meaningful participation is understood as participation that not only takes into account the opinion of children and adolescents, but also includes them as active subjects in all their life processes and areas (Mateos et al, 2017). Article 12 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the right of children and adolescents to be heard. Following this line, Lundy (2007) develops a model of child and adolescent participation which includes four fundamental elements to be taken into account for participation: space, voice, audience and influence. Lacharité et al. (2021) have design an ecological model on the conditions of participation in the child protection system with six dimensions: 1) level of communication, 2) voices of children and parents, 3) family cultures and circumstances, 4) governance and legislation, 5) training of professionals and 6) inter-institutional collaboration. The aim of this paper is to show from a multidisciplinary perspective which elements located in three of these dimensions -legislation, digital communication and attention to diversity- can favour the meaningful participation of children and young people. The originality of this paper lies in the confluence of different views towards the same horizon, the achievement of a truly integrative model of meaningful participation of children and adolescents in the protection system.

*Method:*A systematic review of different documentary sources, scientific literature and Spanish legal texts (both state and regional) from a multidisciplinary perspective selected articles and laws describing the participation of children and adolescents within the child participation system. With the aim of clarifying the research questions, key words were established to carry out the search in scientific databases (Scoopus, ERIC, Web of Knowledge, PubMed, Psycoinfo) and the BOE (Spain's official state journal by its acronym in Spanish). The PRISMA method (Urrútia & Bonfill, 2010) was used for the screening and subsequent content analysis of the scientific articles. In the legislation case, laws regulating the protection of minors were selected and the content was analysed. All of them were carried out by generating different category systems based on the proposal Dimensions of meaningful participation in the child protection system by Bouma et al: informing, listening and involving (2018). The results are part of the Coordinated R&D Project entitled "A socio-educational action model for family reunification in the child and adolescent protection system from the positive parenting approach (FRAME+P)-RTI2018-099305-B-C21", funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

*Results:*Initial results show that the laws analysed reflect the CRC's indications on child participation, however, it does not lead to their practical adequacy to current research innovations (Collins, 2017). The results show that there has been little research on children's participation in their processes through digital tools and the use of new technologies with children needs to be further investigated (Lamb et al. 2020). Regarding attention to diversity in the processes of the protection system, the need to find facilitators for the true integration of vulnerable minority groups is evident (So, 2020).

*Conclusions:*It is confirmed that the best approach for a meaningful, real and effective participation of children and young people in their own processes within the child protection system is through an integrative perspective of different disciplines. It suggests an imminent need for legislative updating, digital implementation and methodological regeneration in terms of participation. The use of new technology will serve to include the voice of diversity in a more appropriate way and legislation must reflect these new trends.

A positive living climate in residential youth care A qualitative study on staff members' perspectives

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Introduction

In residential youth care (RYC), supporting the quality of life of children is a main priority. One of the key factors in providing good quality of care in these services, is developing a positive living group climate (Avby, 2015; Bettelheim, 1967; Kok, 1984; Ter Horst, 1977; Van der Helm, 2011, 2019; Ward, 2004). From a human rights perspective, children have the right to grow up in "normal" circumstances (Ter Horst, 1977; Kok; 1984; Convention on the Rights of the Child; Research SOS Children's villages, 2017). A positive living climate is also described as the main therapeutic factor in RYC services (Triesschman, 1969). Furthermore, Ros et al. (2013) showed that a positive living climate decreases the number of aggression incidents and separation, absconding behaviour (Attar-Schwartz, 2013). It even leads to better coping strategies (Van der Helm, Beunk, Stams & van der Laan, 2014) and more empathy (Heynen, van der Helm, Cima, Stams & Korebrits, 2017). In other words, scholars worldwide emphasize the importance of a positive living climate for the wellbeing of children in contexts of RYC.

Despite the identification of some key elements in achieving such a climate, it seems to remain difficult to present a clear-cut frame that allows RYC services to implement a positive living group climate in their day-to-day practice. Furthermore, we have no to little evidence on the individual and systemic elements that support or inhibit RYC services from developing a positive living environment.

Objectives

From the perspective of the services, we want to unravel elements that support or inhibit RYC services from developing a positive living environment. The objectives of this study were to investigate (1) how respondents perceive a positive living climate, and which (2) tensions they experience in relation to establishing a positive living climate.

Method

The study is linked with the "Back-to-basics" – project in Flanders, that involved twelve residential organisations focusing on improving the living climate. Using semi-structured interviews, ten representatives of the participating organisations were asked about their perceptions in relation to the development of a positive living group climate. The data were analysed by means of inductive thematic analysis.

Results and conclusions

Respondents mention four important aspects related to establishing a positive living climate: creating a home-like environment, wherein building value-based relationships are possible. Respondents also appointed the importance to involve context and to support group workers in a professional way. The participants stressed the importance of conditions to be as normal as possible: e.g. cooking together, doing nothing together, being there to support children, not overloading children with developmental and behavioural expectations, and from the perspective of the child, having a relationship with someone who believes in the other.

Group workers mention different hindering factors to organise these elements and to spend time with youngsters, time that is seen as critical to really understand these children and involve them in organisational day-to-day and group dynamic aspects. Respondents refer to the pressure of organisational aspects, the paradox of autonomy and the ambivalent image of (working in) residential youth care services. As a consequence, they report to struggle with which kind of professionalism in these services is needed.

A pre-college summer program for transition age foster youth: The youth perspective

Dr. Sebrena Jackson (University of Alabama), Mrs. Krystal Dozier (University of Alabama), Dr. Alex Colvin (Texas Woman's University), Dr. Angela Bullock (University of the District of Columbia)

Attending college and earning a college degree is often considered a central part of the American Dream. For a number of youth in foster care, attending college is also a goal. However, foster youth face many insurmountable obstacles which interfere with their educational pursuits. For instance, research reports that many foster youth are vulnerable to homelessness, lack of support and connection from a caring adult, limited financial resources, lack of safe housing, and mental health issues (Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, & Raap, 2010). When attempting to transition to college, many of these youth face obstacles that include navigating the college application process, a lack of preparation for independent living, insufficient financial resources and emotional support to cope with the academic demands and social stresses related to college life (Courtney et al. 2004; Day, et al., 2012; Gillum, et al., 2016; Salazar, 2012).

Researchers have found that youth in foster care in the US graduate at relatively low rates and are less likely to complete high school than their non-foster care peers (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2014). By age 19, only 54% to 58% of foster youth graduate from high school compared to 87% of youth in the general population (Tzawa-Hayden, 2004). In one study, over 70% of 15 to 19-year old youth in foster care expressed a desire to attend college; 19% expressed a desire to attend graduate school (Day, Riebschleger, Dworsky, Damashek, & Fogarty, 2012). Approximately 20% of foster youth who graduate from high school actually attend college and 2-9% of former foster youth will attain a bachelor's degree (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2014).

Studies suggest that one major factor contributing to low college success rates for foster youth is a lack of college preparation (Cohn & Kelly, 2015). According to research by Vargas (2004), pre-college outreach programs can improve college access for underrepresented students. Many universities have begun to recognize the need to create programs to serve the foster youth population. However, very few programs exist that serve foster youth more than 3-5 days during a summer camp experience. Day, Riebschleger, and Wen (2018) have one of the few research studies specific to foster youth and pre-college programs.

The National Social Work Enrichment Program (NSEP), is one strategy used to address the postsecondary education needs of older foster youth in the state of Alabama. Partnering with the Department of Human Resources to identify older foster youth, high school juniors and seniors, to participate in the program, NSEP provides a 6-week college campus experience. Foster youth live on campus in residence halls, eat in university dining facilities, access on-campus recreational facilities, and attend various workshops in the school of social work classrooms. Social work students are also hired to serve as mentors and program assistants. The program has as its primary goals that youth will graduate high school and enroll in college. NSEP has four primary program components: (1) college readiness skill development, (2) employment skill development, (3) leadership skill development, and (4) healthy relationship skill development.

This presentation will discuss and share findings from an exploratory qualitative research study of NSEP. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews of program participants who completed NSEP in the previous five years, who graduated high school, and who were enrolled in college. Special attention will be given to the perspective of the youth participants. The presentation will discuss how the youth perspective can shape future program implementation, future policy, and future research on transition age foster youth. The youth perspective will also be used to inform those who are interested in developing similar pre-college programs.

A scoping review of children's experiences of residential care settings in the global South

Dr. Steven Roche (Charles Darwin University)

Residential Care Settings (RCSs), including orphanages, children's homes, and institutional care, form a significant welfare response in communities across the global South. Given their scale, central role in welfare provision, and the potential harms to children and young people who live in them, a greater understanding of their functions, circumstances, and how they are conceptualised and experienced by children is critical. This presentation presents a scoping review that explores available peer-reviewed articles on children's experiences of residential care settings in the global South. A comprehensive search of ten databases was conducted, and 27 articles included in the review. The study found that models of RCSs are diverse and highly contextual, with children articulating distinct experiences and perspectives of RCSs in the global South. Children express generally positive views towards their RCSs, emphasising a highly relational life, with large peer networks and community connections. They also draw attention to the material benefits of RCSs in comparison to prior care with family, and educative opportunities that they provide. Challenges include maintaining relationships with family, constraints on their agency in day-to-day life, as well as navigating disruption around identity and belonging, indicating clear areas for policy and practice development that may improve family relationality and reduce social exclusion.

A Systematic Review into the Social Networks and the Transition to Adulthood of Unaccompanied Refugee Children

Mr. Kjell Winkens (University of Groningen), Dr. Elianne Zijlstra (University of Groningen), Dr. Wendy Post (University of Groningen), Prof. Monika Smit (University of Groningen)

Introduction

When unaccompanied refugee children arrive in their host countries, they are often in the final years of their (nominal) childhood. Between 2016 and 2019, more than 70 percent of the asylum-seeking children in the EU was 16 years or older (Eurostat 2020). This means that they often have few years to get settled in their host countries before they age out of care.

During this period of transition, besides adjusting to a new country and processing trauma, refugee children face similar challenges as non-refugee care leavers. For example, identity-formation, planning for the future, employment or education and self-reliance are all choices that both groups have to make when they transition from care (e.g. Sirriyeh & Ní Raghallaigh 2018; Wade 2019). The presence of social support structures has an influence on the transition to adulthood of care leavers (Blakeslee 2012). However, little has been published on the influence of social networks on the transition of unaccompanied refugee children. The role of family abroad, especially, is an underexposed topic, although transnational family can influence the life choices that children make in their host countries (Pérez & Salgado 2019).

Objectives

This systematic review maps the influence that family and wider social or professional networks have on the choices that unaccompanied refugee children make during their transition to adulthood. Besides aggregating and analysing the current knowledge on this topic, we also want to identify possible research gaps. Furthermore, by exploring the influence that social networks have on the outcomes of a child's transition to adulthood, we want to help inspire interventions to improve or support their transition.

Methods

A search was conducted in five databases: Web of Science, PsycINFO, SOCindex, IBSS and Scopus. Furthermore, reference lists were checked for additional relevant sources in the full-text reviewing phase. We searched for studies published in academic, peer-reviewed journals between January 1990 and January 2021. Included were studies, written in English, that present empirical research in the social and behavioural sciences on the direct impact of social relations on the transition to adulthood of unaccompanied refugee children. With regard to our search terms, we have chosen to maintain a broad scope, in order to also include notions of 'adulthood' and 'family' that might fall outside of a 'Western' definition of either. A thematic analysis was applied to the included articles, using an inductive coding system, to identify relevant themes in the data (Braun & Clarke 2006).

Results

Currently, the systematic review is ongoing. Our results will be presented at the conference. This presentation will include an overview of the various decisions that the reviewed literature describes as important milestones during the transition to adulthood. We will also identify the various informal and professional networks surrounding a refugee child, and their influence on those various choices.

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A systems model of repeat court-ordered removals: Responding to child protection challenges using a systems approach

Prof. Sarah Wise (The University of Melb)

Child protection systems in many western countries are facing significant challenges. Repeat removals, where parents lose successive infants and children to out-of-home care, is a sizeable problem. Research conducted in the UK and Australia suggest that approximately 20 per cent of women experience repeat court-ordered removals.

Currently, initiatives designed to prevent successive babies and children entering out-of-home care tend to target the parents affected. However, there is growing awareness that tertiary responses and discrete interventions never manage to address the underlying and inter-sectional issues that produce complex problems. A systems approach, which aims to understand and shift the activity of interrelated factors, has been enlightening when tackling a range of complex public policy problems.

This paper describes a systemic inquiry into repeat removals undertaken by a trans-disciplinary group of key stakeholders in the Australian context. Causal loop diagramming was the method used to capture the dynamic cycles of influence and identify places for systemic intervention. The causal loop diagram of repeat removals was created by; identifying factors of importance to the issue from the literature and participants own knowledge and experience, identifying lower level systemic (root) causes, and identifying connections between them. Analysis of the causal loop diagram surfaced 8 dynamic positive feedback loops which results in a self-reinforcing system. Stakeholders homed in on stigmatised stereotypes of recurrent birth mothers and the child protection culture, practitioner decision making, parent-practitioner interactions and parental participation in child protection case planning as ways of correcting against vicious feedback loops.

While the causal loop diagram reflects the understanding of a relatively small group, and requires further testing, it adds to current conceptualisations of repeat removal by hypothesising systemic causes and offers new directions for prevention.

A Way Home - Reimagine solutions to youth homelessness in Flanders and Brussels

Ms. Gwendy Moentjens (Researcher and Lecturer), Prof. Koen Hermans (Assistant Professor), Mr. Wim Van Tongel (Researcher and Lecturer), Mrs. An Rommel (Policy officer)

The government agency 'Growing Up' and the universities AP en KULeuven want to present the methodology and intermediary results of the project 'A Way Home – Reimagine solutions to youth homelessness'. This project lifts up the capacities of communities in Flanders and Brussels in developing A Way Home (AWH) coalitions who install substantial cultural and systemic changes in the way we currently manage the range of interconnected issues that lead to youth homelessness, putting central the strengths, needs and dreams of young people. AWH started in Canada as a national coalition re-imagining solutions to youth homelessness through transformations in policy, planning and practice and it evolved towards an international movement.

Although no harmonised statistics exists on homelessness at European level, Feantsa publishes worrying figures. An estimated 20-30% of homeless people in Europe are aged 18-30 years old and homelessness in the 16-24 age group rose by 82% between 2014 and 2018. A sample of young people between 16 and 25 shows that 26% of all young people have ever slept outside or in unsafe situations (car, bus, tent) Of the young people surveyed, 20% did sofa surfing during the last year, partly due to conflicts with parents. Research (Benjaminsen, 2016) describes that for only the half of homeless young people 'classic risk factors' are determinate as a past in youth care or growing up in poverty. There is a new growing group of homeless young people who are confronted with difficulties in the transition to adulthood, with a tightening up and conditioning of social security and/or with unaffordable housing prices.

If we want to make a significant change in these worrying figures, the society needs to make a shift away from simply "managing" the problem of youth homelessness through emergency services to a more proactive, rights-based approach that focuses on prevention, stopping young people from becoming homeless, and helping those who are homeless move into housing with supports as rapidly as possible in a safe and planned way. Youth homelessness is a fusion policy issue, meaning that the many systems that drive young people into homelessness must also be part of the solutions. The A Way Home movement believes that in order to address the youth homelessness problem, the effort needs to come from various sectors, including youth and adult care, housing, education and training, work and social economy, justice, leisure and youth work, … In order to make the shift to a proactive and rights-based approach through joint efforts, A Way Home proposes the collective impact model to drive a broad coalition forward with 5 important basic conditions: common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities, shared measurement, continuous communication and back bone support. In Flanders and Brussels 10 regions are piloting with AWH coalitions each supported by a back bone support. In this presentation, we present how we realise these 5 conditions by means of backbone support. This backbone support consists of training, individual consults and national and international learning networks. We show how this support specifically contributes to

(1) the creation of a large support base for a shared aspiration of ending youth homelessness and building bridges with different sectors and stakeholders at regional and local level

(2) the involvement of young people with lived experience (youth participation)

(3) the development of innovative strategies to re-imagine solutions to youth homelessness on different levels of prevention: structural prevention, systems prevention, early intervention, eviction prevention and housing stabilization

A youth-led feasibility study of the applicability of a family finding model for use in British Columbia, Canada

Dr. Annie Smith (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Katie Horton (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Maya Peled (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Stephanie Martin (McCreary Centre Society)

Objective: A family finding 'Boot Camp' model has been developed to support youth transitioning out of government care (child welfare services) to establish/re-establish relationships with extended family or other adults, with the intention of supporting youth to develop long-term natural support networks. The model was being considered for use in British Columbia (BC), Canada.

McCreary Centre Society, a local community research organisation which operates the Youth Research Academy (YRA), was commissioned to complete a feasibility study of the model's utility for BC. The YRA trains 6-8 youth with government care experience in community-based research each year.

Method: Members of the YRA conducted a literature review and environmental scan, and developed interview questions and a focus groups script to garner the perspectives of other youth in and from government care and the agencies which serve them.

Results: The YRA's literature review found relatively little evidence of family finding programs which had been rigorously evaluated or were achieving their intended outcomes, and noted that firm conclusions could not yet be made about the long-term efficacy of the model.

Interviews conducted by members of the YRA with professionals who had delivered family finding models suggested that any program seeking to increase lifetime natural supports for youth should not be delivered in isolation. To be successful it needs to be part of an ongoing and larger package of services which includes building life skills, resilience and relationship skills, and supporting youth with employment and education opportunities. It also needs to be sufficiently resourced and supported to become an integrated part of service delivery.

Youth and youth-serving agencies in BC consistently raised concerns about the potential for a family finding model to cause further distress for youth who had previously had negative experiences in their attempts to connect with family members and other adults. They identified the need for youth to be supported to learn how to identify and participate in healthy relationships before engaging in any family finding program. The majority also felt that a multi-day youth boot camp would be challenging to attend both practically and emotionally. Instead they suggested that a program that allowed youth to meet prospective non-familial adult mentors in social settings—and where youth can develop relationships slowly—may be a more appropriate model for BC.

BC stakeholders, including youth who had previously attempted to re-connect with extended family, were concerned about the capacity of local agencies to support the process of family finding. However, there was support for staff boot camps, and for agency staff learning the techniques of family finding. It was hoped that this would ensure family finding becomes an integrated part of service delivery to youth entering government care.

Conclusion: The YRA's study concluded that a family finding boot camp model offered in isolation would have limited effectiveness in BC for youth who are aging out of care. Offering a range of different family finding and natural mentorship opportunities and embedding strategies of developing lifelong natural supports into children's and youth's care planning from the moment they enter government care was suggested as more likely to be an effective approach.

Achieving permanency with timely decision making: Australian actuarial analyses of foster care and adoption outcomes

Ms. Deirdre Cheers (Barnardos Australia), Ms. Elizabeth Cox (Barnardos Australia), Dr. Robert Urquhart (The University of Sydney and Barnardos Australia)

Introduction

Barnardos Australia permanency practice models for foster care are designed to connect legal status with planned child placement outcome. All Barnardos' out-of-home care (OOHC) programs specialise in the achievement of permanency via family reunification, placement with kin, guardianship, open adoption, or long term permanent foster care.

Barnardos Temporary Family Care (TFC) model is positioned at the front end of the permanency continuum and is the initial point of contact for new entry children to foster care. TFC has an explicit focus on maintaining children within their family or kinship networks (when it is safe for the child to do so). Barnardos Find-a-Family (FAF) model offers integrated open adoption and permanent foster care to children requiring long-term placement if it is unsafe for them to remain at home following permanent legal removal from family.

The evidence based model fidelity of each Barnardos permanency program is maintained by training and supporting staff to adhere to program practice models and by recruiting and training carers specifically for each cohort of children.

Objectives

This presentation will examine the achievement of restoration outcomes from Barnardos TFC program and the impact of timely decision making about the need for long-term care.

It will also focus on the achievement of open adoption as a permanency outcome from Barnardos FAF program when family restoration is unable to be achieved in a child developmentally appropriate and timely manner.

Method

The paper will present previously unreleased independent actuarial analyses of permanency and stability outcomes over a ten year period, for Australia children and young people in Barnardos foster care. It will further focus on previously unreleased actuarial analyses of the extent to which a TFC placement influences later permanent placements, as measured by further durations in care, exit outcomes and placement stability over time.

Results

Results highlight the role of timely decision making for children have been supported by the model fidelity of the TFC and FAF programs. The TFC program with a focus on restoration has achieved short durations in care averaging approximately 6-9 months; and high levels of stability for children in this program with more than 80% of children having only one TFC placement (well above comparable averages from publicly available Australian data). If restoration is not a viable option for the child, the synchronisation between TFC and FAF ensures timely transition and attention to open adoption as a permanency outcome. The evidence demonstrates that for the cases where this occurs, subsequent outcomes are better than those for children and young people who do not have a prior TFC placement.

The paper discusses the impact of open adoption in shortening the duration of time spent in foster care. Findings show the younger the age of a child on placement in foster care, the more likely they are to be adopted, and the less time they will spend in the child protection and foster care system.

Conclusions

Actuarial analysis is not commonly utilised in considering child placement stability in child protection, or length of time spent in foster care.

By demonstrating the connection between legal status, placement planning and open adoption outcome, implications will be drawn as to how the alignment of program models impact permanency outcomes and how practitioners can best ensure child focussed timely decision making for adoption.

Acting out – in order to find words for the distress of young persons/children in residential child care

Prof. Hanspeter Hongler (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family), Mr. Carmelo Campanello (Director Burghof Pestalozzi Jugendstätte), Mr. Micha Bänteli (Forum Theater Zurich)

Seriously traumatized children and young people are difficult to handle in residential childcare institutions as they will use projection and projective identification to pull childcare workers into repetitive enactments where their state of mind is communicated not by words but by often violent, destructive and disturbing (inter-)actions. For the childcare workers involved, it is crucial to learn how to monitor their own reactions and impulses in such situations and find some internal space and framework to think about what is going on “while under fire” (Bion).

Psychoanalytic pedagogy has developed concepts that are helpful in understanding and finding out a pedagogic approach to preverbal, not symbolized material acted in the institutional environment and address the complexity and multidimensionality of such situations.

We have worked with a combination of information, Forum Theatre and group discussions and have found it helpful in providing a space for individuals, groups and teams to bring together their emotional experience in such interactions, where it can be refelcted and put into words.

The implementation contains the following steps:

First, some theoretical information is presented about one or two specific concepts of psychoanalytic pedagogy like “Transference/Countertransference”, “Splitting”, “Projective Identification” or “Holding/Containing”, “Scenic Understanding”, “Golden Phantasy”, including case examples and vignettes. To achieve a certain profundity the information should be introduced in a cycle of several sessions.

Then, a group of Forum Theatre actors will stage one or two corresponding scenes of conflictive interactions between children/young persons and child care workers in a short play which had been prepared in advance with the lecturer of the theoretical informations. After a first production, the actors talk about how they felt in particular moments of the play. They reconstruct their internal conflict and doubts, anger, anxieties, persecutory feelings, role identifications in order to be a model of self-disclosure and self-reflection.

After the first exemplary played scene and the actor’s angle ideas will come up and be discussed with the audiance, thinking about different dynamics that may unfold and trying out alternatives how to react. This may be repeated in several cycles always with different ideas or angles. The lecturer attends and supervises this process. The audience is invited to think in terms of the theoretical framework provided in the information. The actors may then play the scene again, considering the new ideas. They may invite somebody who came up with a different approach or angle to come on stage and take on a particular role himself or herself. Again, the outcome will be discussed including prognostic reflections about a possible development in the future.

It is evident that the actors of the Forum Theatre need a previous introduction into psychoanalytical core concepts as well as a good understanding and insight into residential child care settings.

During the discussion and the replaying of the scenes the experts’ role is to help to integrate and link the scenic enactment, mutual emotions and dynamic developments to the theoretical and conceptual framework set out before.

We have found that exploring and reflecting their own emotional experience helps the childcare workers to be more fully aware of the perspective of the child/young person. The experience may be touching and moving but also enlightening and relieving and promote a mutual growing.

Adolescence and mental health in residential care: portrait of a decade in Portugal

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Adolescence is one of the most curious and interesting periods of human development with complex neurobiological and social relational changes (Moretti, Psalich, Donnell, 2019). Transition to residential care, as well as experiencing maltreatment, non-responsive, and neglectful relationships with primary caregivers can enhance adolescent's vulnerability to the development of behavioral and emotional maladjustment (e.g., Costa, Mota & Matos, 2019; Mota & Matos, 2014).

Portugal, as a paradigmatic example of historic reliance on the use of residential care, has nowadays one of the highest rates of children and young people in residential care, even when comparing with other European countries such as Greece, Spain or Germany (Delgado, Pinto, Carvalho & Gilligan, 2018). According to the most recent national report, it is estimated that 6855 children and adolescents were under any type of residential care (ISSIP, 2020). The prevalence is higher for adolescents (54%), and 77% of behavior problems have been diagnosed between the ages of 12 and 17 years old (ISSIP, 2020).

At the present time, there are important structural changes being conducted in child and youth welfare policies, namely in what concerns promotion and protection measures in residential and foster care. Legal frameworks adopted in 2019 highlight the need to develop tailored interventions adapted to the child and youth idiosyncrasies and elect their voice on decisions that affect their lives.

Considering this, knowledge production on the characteristics and needs of the population under residential care measures, can contribute to the development of more comprehensive policies and interventions. Since 2007, the National Social Security sector has been producing, on an annual basis, a detailed report that characterizes, mainly through cross sectional analysis, out of home care in Portugal. These documents provide background and context, and act as an important mean to track the development and change that occurred over the years (Bowen, 2009).

In this sense, in this paper we will present a comparative analysis of demographic indicators and psychosocial adjustment, and measures prior to placement, published in the reports of the last decade (2009 - 2019). This will include behavior and severity problems, mental health of young people and taking pedopsychiatric medication, as well as the existence of regular / irregular monitoring of mental health - pedopsychiatric and / or psychological.

This study is part of a major project called CareMe (Efficacy of an attachment-based intervention in residential care: A randomized controlled trial on the effects on the caregivers' relational skills and the adolescents' psychosocial adaptation) developed with the aim of improving caregiving practices in residential care, and ultimately contribute to adolescents adaptive psychosocial development.

Results will be discussed considering adolescents needs, challenges and implications for policies in order to inform interventions that are more closely connected to protection and ultimately to human rights.

Adolescents in residential care and how they perceive school and their relationship with teachers

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Young people in residential care have had in their past experiences of maltreatment to which are associated feelings of loss, abandonment and solitude that contribute to maladaptive developmental pathways. Nevertheless, these risk factors can be mitigated by protective factors, such as relationships with figures that can give valuable responses to the emotional, cognitive and social needs of these children, thus enhancing a more adaptive trajectory. Among these figures, teachers assume an important role not only because of the time they spend with children, but also because of the important role they play in their learning process and on their global development. The main goal of this research is to acknowledge the perception adoelscents living in residential care have about school and about their relationship with teachers. Based on grounded theory methodology, this qualitative study was conducted with 11 adolescents (7 boys; 4 girls), aged between 12 and 17 years old (M=14, SD=1,27), living in residential care for a minimum of one year and a maximum of 13 years (M=5,55; SD=3,79). Except for one adolescent (5th grade), all of them are in the second cycle of education (7th, 8th and 9th grades). Eight of them have already had a retention. The semi-structured interview was guided by a pre-made script.

The results revealed that these students have a dichotomous view about their relationship with the school and with the teachers, even though it tends to be more negative. Students highlighted the teachers' socioemotional skills, namely the provision of care and the expression of concern, as fundamental factors for establishing a positive relationship with them and confirmed that the relationships they maintain with teachers influence the way they perceive the school and learning. A negative perception of the school can be influenced by the school's unsafe climate and by the negative relationships that are maintained with teachers, that, in turn, are influenced by what adolescents perceive to be the teachers 'lack of teaching skills, which hinder students' involvement and learning, the use of ineffective behavior regulation strategies and the lack of demonstration of understanding and interest in students. Results also pointed to the existence of discriminatory behaviors from teachers, which not only creates disruptive relationships with them, but also impair students' school involvement and, consequently, learning.

Positive and negative views of the adolescents in residential care about their teachers, orbit around their teaching competencies, strategies to regulate behavior, care provided, moral values and personality characteristics. They valued the ability of the teacher to innovate pedagogically, to make use of technology, and to actively involve the students in the process of teaching and learning. They reported the need to perceive support and interest from the teachers, what is convergent with the idea that when students perceive as positive their relationship with the teacher, they are valuing not only academic outcomes but also a secure affective relationship. Negative and punitive strategies to regulate behavior are seen as ineffective and detrimental to the student's motivation to cope with the teachers. Socioemotional skills of the teacher emerged as core skills to deal with the educational and behavioral difficulties presented by adolescents in residential care at school. Although these results may not be very different from what can be found with adolescents that do not live in residential care, they can be valuable when designing teacher training on developmental trauma, its manifestations at school and in the classroom, and how to deal and overcome them.

Keywords: Perception, School, Teachers, Adolescents, Residential Care

Adolescents living in Residential Youth Care: associations between perceived social support and symptom loads of psychiatric disorders

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Background: Adolescents living in residential youth care (RYC) often have a background of abuse, neglect and several disrupted attachments. They have a high prevalence of mental health problems and perceive less social support than adolescents in the general population. This makes them more prone to a negative psychological and social development. Therefore, knowledge of possible protective factors is crucial to optimize their care when living in RYC. Previous research has indicated that perceiving social support is associated with less mental health problems, but no in-dept research with youth in RYC has been identified.

Methods: The current study aims to investigate associations between symptom loads of four psychiatric diagnostic categories (retrieved from the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Assessment, CAPA) and perceived social support (using the Social Support Questionnaire, SSQ), using linear regression analyses and independent samples t-test. Analyses were carried out for 400 adolescents (aged 12–20) living in 86 (87% of all) Norwegian RYC facilities.

Results: We found that a high number of social support persons was associated with a low symptom load of emotional problems for both girls and boys. In addition, perceiving social support from individual support providers were associated with emotional symptoms for girls (support from father, friends and RYC staff) and behavioral symptoms for boys (support from father and RYC staff).

Conclusions: We conclude that a higher number of support persons is beneficial for adolescents' mental health when living in RYC. In addition, primary care providers and friends holds important roles in providing social support when parental support is absent. It is therefore important to maintain social networks for adolescents in RYC, and staff should prioritize supporting and developing relational skills and competence toward the adolescents.

Adult adoptees' views of their adoption: Findings from a study of outcomes of open adoption from out-of-home care

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Introduction

This paper explores the views of adult adoptees about their adoption, drawing from a research study of Australian children adopted from foster care over a twenty-six year period (1986-2012). It will examine adoptees' perceptions about the impact of adoption, relationships with their adoptive family, sense of security and belonging, impressions of adoption processes, experiences of post-adoption contact and relationships with birth family members.

Objectives

The paper analyses the full range of adult adoptees' experiences. It will examine the importance of giving weight to adoptees' views, preparing prospective adoptive parents, shaping child-centred contact policies and planning and achieving permanency. Barnardos Find-a-Family program focussed on children with high levels of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) while living with birth parents, and sometimes increased vulnerability incurred in the foster care system, and specialised in placement of large sibling groups, supporting ongoing face-to-face contact between adoptees and their birth families (open adoption).

Method

The study was a collaboration between the University of Oxford, Loughborough University and Barnardos Australia. It was conducted in a foster care program for children permanently removed from their parents' care by a Children's Court, as a result of child protection concerns. This program then placed children in permanent foster care prior to consideration of adoption.

To gain information on the adoptees and their birth and adoptive parents prior to adoption, the researchers harvested historical data from administrative records for the entire cohort of adoptees (n=210). The researchers conducted online surveys (54 adoptees and 86 adoptive parents) and in-depth interviews with adult adoptees and adoptive parents (20 adoptees and 21 adoptive parents).

This paper will draw mainly from analysis of the interviews with the 20 adoptees; all but one interview was undertaken face-to-face. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by an external agency; then analysed thematically by Loughborough University to ensure transparency.

Results

Case studies show that adoption had contributed to relatively positive outcomes for the adoptees, most of whom were functioning successfully. Many adoptees noted their increased sense of stability and belonging and the positive contribution of their adoptive parents, in terms of long-term commitment, support and provision of a secure base. Most adoptees were happy with the agency's processes to match them with families.

Adoptees' experiences of contact were varied and complex; contact was shown to be important to adoptees and there was no evidence that it destabilised placements. Adoptees who had better relationships with their adoptive families experienced more closure of their experiences of separation and loss from removal from their birth families. Open adoption fostered adoptees' sense of belonging and security and adoptees had a strengthened sense of identity as a direct result of open adoption.

Conclusions

Adoption has played an important role in the adult functioning of adoptees in this study. Most view it as having positively changed their lives and having formalised their position in the family. Many spoke about the increased sense of stability and belonging. However, despite progress in many areas, many adoptees continued to evidence an underlying, enduring vulnerability as a result of early childhood experiences, which has implications for child protection decision making and adoptive parent preparation.

Evidence shows that contact has been beneficial for most adoptees and needs to be promoted. However, adoptees wanted a role in decision making in this area; this requires careful management from practitioners, based on the individual and changing needs of each child.

The process of consultation with adoptees is valuable in terms of improving practice and policy.

Adult outcomes of being cared for in institutional or family settings, the Office of National Statistics Longitudinal Study

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Objectives: To investigate the differing long-term social outcomes of children who had been cared for in residential or family settings compared with children who were living with a parent.

Method: Data come from the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study (LS), a 1% representative sample of the population of England and Wales. To create a longitudinal dataset, the LS has linked records for each census after LS members were sampled in one of five census years between 1971-2011. The children in this study were sampled in 1971-2001 and followed-up until 2011 (Total observations»694,000 in parental households; »7,000 in care). Adult outcomes cover the domains of education, work, relationships and living arrangements. Multiple exposure models were fitted as parallel regression models that allow for one or two census records in childhood with outcomes measured at age 20-29, 30-39 and 40-49 years old. Baseline childhood demographic and social circumstances were controlled for. Interaction terms with care type were used to test whether there was variation in outcomes by gender or baseline census year.

Results: Findings indicate that those who had been in care were 54% less likely to achieve 18+ level qualifications by their 20s (OR 0.54; 95% CI 0.48, 0.60), although the educational gap narrowed by the time they had reached their 40s (OR 0.78; 95% CI 0.69, 0.88).

Children in care were also twice as likely or more to be unemployed later in life. This applied across the adult years, in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Consistent with the catch-up in educational qualifications, care leavers were more likely to be in full-time education in their 30s (OR 3.05; 95% CI 2.44, 3.81) and 40s (OR 1.95; 95% CI 1.55, 2.46) than their non-care experienced peers. Care-leavers were also consistently more likely to be out of the labour force for reasons other than education (looking after the home; permanently sick, retired, other: OR 1.56; 95% CI 1.31, 1.85 at age 40-49 year). Even for those in employment, care experienced individuals were likely to be in a more disadvantaged social class than the comparison group with only a slight narrowing of the differences by the time they reached their 40s.

Care leavers were less likely to be single in their 20s (OR 0.79; 95% CI 0.72, 0.88), but also more likely to be widowed/divorced in their 30s and 40s. At the same time, some care leavers were more likely to be living alone in their 20s (OR 1.35; 95% CI 1.14,1.61). The odds of living alone increased markedly by the age of 40-49 years (OR 2.34; 95% CI 1.27, 4.31), presumably as ex-partnered care leavers expanded the numbers living alone.

Finally, living arrangements for those who had been in care were worse than for the comparison group. The disparities did not improve over time, rather there was a suggestion of an entrenchment of disadvantage with a slightly greater chance of living in overcrowded accommodation and renting in their 40s than in their 20s (OR 1.50 vs. 1.42 and OR 1.85 vs. 1.66, respectively).

Conclusions: Adult outcomes after being cared for in childhood were universally poorer than for the reference group of children who were not care-experienced. Whist there was some evidence of catch-up in qualifications, this did not result in any social or economic improvements by the end of follow-up when in their 40s. Care experienced adults need continued support to take advantage of the opportunities available so that they can realise their aspirations for a fulfilling job, a long-term stable relationship and secure comfortable living conditions.

Adults’ perspectives on receiving psychiatric diagnosis and treatment as children in care. A qualitative exploratory study.

Mx. Ana Olea Fernandez (University of Essex)

DSM-III (the American Psychiatric Association’s psychiatric manual) and its successors have been the subject of intense criticism since its inception in 1980, as has been the use of psychotropic drugs that this diagnostic system contributed to expand. However, the consequences for children in care of an atheoretical psychiatric classification, with little regard to context, and implicit emphasis on individual’s brain dysfunctions have not been explored.

Having been raised in most cases under what can be considered severe adverse circumstances, these children may display, whilst in care, disruptive and disturbing behaviours that make looking after them an equally extreme and exhausting experience. In cases when a mental health problem is considered to be behind their behaviours, the only resource available from psychiatry is a diagnosis that quite frequently places exclusive aetiology of how the child presents on the children’s biology, severing any link with their previous or present experiences and paving the way to pharmacological treatments.

This presentation considers the preliminary findings of a research project designed to study the perspective of adults with care experience on the psychiatric diagnoses and treatment/s they received whilst they were in care, and to compare them with the practices and views of social workers, as representatives of the State’s corporate parenting. In this presentation we will focus on the responses from the adults with experience of both the care and mental health systems.

Within a qualitative methodological framework, the study adopted participatory approaches borrowed from Participatory Action Research (PAR) to widen the scope of participation. Care experienced people (CEP) could choose whether, and how, to share their experiences, as well as comment on their analysis. In addition, or alternatively, CEP could discuss the questions to be asked to social workers, as well as excerpts from their responses. Finally, CEP had the opportunity to share their views following the screening of a documentary on psychotropic drugs.

Our findings show that, although academic literature has given salience to identity formation and stigma in the area of mental health, these do not feature prominently in the responses from CEP. Instead, the responses contain a high degree of ambivalence towards both their diagnoses and the treatment (drugs and/or therapy) that CEP received as children and into their adulthood. At the same time, they reveal that the same criticism of superficiality and decontextualisation that have been used against psychiatric diagnoses can actually be applied to social work intervention. All respondents described lack of curiosity, of “delving into” what was behind the children and teenagers’ presentations. Related to this, all CEP were very conscious of the existence of two versions of their experiences, the children’s and the adults’ (parents and/or professionals), most of the time painfully in contradiction with each other. However, their responses also show a dynamic relationship between these two versions. At one end, the adults’ version was felt as oppressively imposed on the child; on the other, the child actively attempted to control the ‘working version’ by consciously choosing what pieces of information to share with the adults, giving the child an unexpected, albeit not felt, kind of ‘power’.

The scope of this research is exploratory. However, the seriousness of the potential for iatrogenic harm as well as the vulnerable position of children in care to serve the spurious interests of other agents, such as the pharmaceutical industry and neoliberal policies that disregard social contexts, demands social workers to start studying more attentively this intersection between care system and psychiatric diagnostic classification.

Agency and social support from a relational perspective

Prof. Elisabeth Backe-Hansen (OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University)

The objective of this paper is to discuss the role Child Welfare professionals may play in assisting care-experienced young adults through their transition to adulthood. Timely and effective aftercare services must be understood from a relational perspective through a combination of agency on the part of the young adult and offers of flexible support on the part of the professional. Flexible support is understood as a combination of social support and other services provided in a manner that is sensitive to changes over time. Agency and flexible support are seen as interconnected, with any one leading to the other depending on the communicative processes unfolding themselves between the care leaver and the professional. In addition the importance of seeing the individual. The paper builds on analysis of interviews with 16 care-experienced young adults aged 20-32, who were all either in education or employment at the time. Most of them were interviewed again about a year later. They are the Norwegian part of a larger, comparative study in Denmark, Norway, and England involving 75 young adults. A phenomenological and hermeneutical approach was combined by placing the participants' experiences at the centre, while at the same time interpreting these in relation to their life stories and institutional framework.

The analyses highlighted two subgroups among the young adults: those who experienced the services they had received as timely and adequate (n=6), and those who were not offered services or found them inadequate (n=10). Flexible support and agency were important to both these subgroups, but in different ways. We saw that flexible support could be provided by the professionals in ways that allowed the young adults to experience agency and influence their own situation positively. In these processes, the latter underlined the importance of the quality of their relationship with their caseworkers. Conversely, when the young adults were dissatisfied or had refused after care services outright, they were critical of the relationship as well, as well as having experienced a lack of agency (Bakketeig & Backe-Hansen, 2018).

In Norway, the aftercare period was between the ages of 18 and 23 (now 25). Most services are offered to the 18 and 19 year olds, and it is fairly rare to receive such services until the age of 23. The participants reflected on the significance of their contact with the CWS both when they received services and afterwards. The oldest participant, a woman who was around 30 years old, described how her caseworker had followed her until she was 23, and was available afterwards as well. This had been a significant source of support for her until she had established herself with permanent employment, her own flat, and a circle of good friends.

The discussion will be based on a theoretical model (Feeney & Collins, 2015), seeing relationships as central in furthering or hindering wellbeing and development. Close relationships are more than a resource when things are difficult. Relationships may also enable people to utilize opportunities for growth and development when they are not facing adversity. Aftercare research has so far focused most on the first of these, making relationships more like a means to an end. Seeing relationships as a goal in itself opens up for a more open, positive and flexible approach to keeping in contact with care-experienced young adults.

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Agency of the child in the European Court of Human Rights child protection cases

Dr. Katre Luhamaa (University of Tartu)

Decisions about children, and in particular, child protection decisions often fail to emphasise sufficiently the subjectivity and individual worth of the individual child (Breen et al., in press; Skivenes and Strandbu, 2006). Often this happens because the adults involved in the proceedings focus on the protection of the child and see child's participation in the proceedings as harmful (Strömpl and Luhamaa, in preparation; Toivonen et al., in preparation). Research supports an opposite conclusion – substantive involvement in the proceedings supports the child and her agency as a full holder of rights (Lundy 2007; Strömpl and Luhamaa, in preparation).

Child's right to participate in the proceedings is regulated in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stresses the child's right to express her views as well as the state's obligation to hear the views of the child and give these views a due weight. Child's right to participate creates an obligation which requires that the professionals recognise a child as an individual actor who is expert of her own life with an agency and capacity to act (c.f. Duncan, 2019; Stoecklin, 2012). European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) interprets this obligation as binding when it views cases relating to children under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Child welfare removal is the strictest measure of state intervention in family autonomy, which should be the last resort taken to protect a child's well-being when other measures targeted to the family have failed (e.g. Burns, Pösö, and Skivenes, 2017; Strand Lobben v. Norway 2019, para 207). All of the child protection decisions deal with a child who is in an especially vulnerable situation. The individual or general vulnerability of the child is analysed and shaped in such contexts by the professionals, often without a clear input from the child and an account on how the child evaluates her vulnerability.

Current analysis focuses on the child protection judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (most recently e.g. Strand Lobben et al. v. Norway [GC] 2019; A.S. v. Norway 2019; Abdi Ibrahim v. Norway 2019) and analyses the ways child's agency and voice is expressed in these judgments. While the topics discussed in child protection cases range from procedural requirements, and general principles to legality of intervention, reunification, and contact arrangements, they all focus on children who have no independent standing at the ECtHR. Furthermore, most of these cases focus on the right to respect of family life of the biological parents (Article 8) of the ECHR; there are also cases where the child's right to family life is analysed and where the child is a party to the proceedings usually represented by the biological parents.

Current analysis maps all the child protection cases of the ECtHR between 1950-2019 with an aim to see, whether the child's voice is represented in these proceedings, who represents this voice and whether such representation accepts and enforces child's agency (cf Helland, 2019). It further aims to see how the ECtHR conceptualises the child's voice and agency in the national proceedings and in the proceedings of the ECtHR.

While such analysis sheds light on ways the child centricity is conceptualised by the judiciary in general, it is also relevant for the more specific context of the ECtHR, which has, until recently, heard the child in public law cases through adults with their own (and sometimes conflicting) interests (e.g. joint dissenting opinion of judges Koskelo and Norden, Strand Lobben v. Norway 2019).

An Intersectional Analysis of the College-Going Experiences of Students of Color with Disabilities in Foster Care

Dr. Mauriell Amechi (Old Dominion University), Dr. Tracie Lowe (The University of Texas at Austin)

Context: There is growing public and scholarly concern regarding youth with dis/abilities[1] in the United States foster care system and their transition to adulthood. Extant research has found a significant correlation between foster care placement and diagnosed mental health challenges, such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. In a system that supports over 400,000 young people annually, African American and American Indian children experience disproportionate placements in foster care. Not only do children of color experience longer stays and more restrictive settings in foster care than their White counterparts, but they also tend to lack access to vital services and resources.

While youths of color are disproportionately labeled with dis/abilities, understandings of their intersectional, nuanced experience are less documented and understood. Furthermore, little is known about their post-secondary participation. A policy report by the National Council on Disability (2008) draws attention to the complex needs of this underserved and often ignored population: "What is often overlooked among experts in [the child welfare and disability] realms is the idea that foster care is indeed both a child welfare issue and a disability issue. This is due to the alarmingly high numbers of foster youth with mental, developmental, emotional, learning, and physical disabilities."(p. 8)

Objectives: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the transition to college for students of color with dis/abilities in foster care. Two central questions inform this study: (1) How do students of color with dis/abilities in foster care describe their transition to college? (2) What barriers do students of color with dis/abilities in foster care perceive as impeding their sense of belonging, engagement, and persistence in college?

Method: To facilitate understanding of the complex lived experiences of college students of color with dis/abilities in foster care, we employed qualitative research methods. Given the exploratory nature of this study and the underrepresentation of foster youth with dis/abilities in higher education, the principal investigator sought prospective participants from a broad range of higher education institutions. Four participants attended public two-year colleges, four participants attended public four-year colleges and universities, and one participant attended a private four-year university. All nine participants in this study were women. With exception to one participant, all of the women were the first members of their families to attend college. Four participants self-identified as Black/African American, two as Latino/Hispanic, and three as having two or more races. All of the participants self-identified as having dis/abilities that were invisible. On the other hand, two individuals described their dis/ability as both hidden and visible.

Result: Using Dis/ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit) as an analytic framework and interview methods, three major themes were revealed: participants reported: (a) barriers to student engagement due to mental health issues, work commitments, family responsibilities, and house insecurity; (b) navigating administrative hurdles and extensive waitlist in order to receive counseling services, and (c) overcoming setbacks in the transition from high school to college due to low expectations held by stakeholders in child welfare and higher education.

Conclusion: By centering the intersectional experiences of students of color with dis/abilities in foster care and highlighting diversity *within*foster care, this work contributes to extant research by dispelling monolithic portrayals of foster youth. This work also uncovers the unmet needs of an oft-invisible college student population and the need for customized student services on campuses. Overall, findings from this study have key implications for concerned stakeholders in higher education (e.g., student affairs professionals), child welfare agencies (e.g., case managers), and policy who endeavor to close persistent inequities in postsecondary participation.

[1] Dis/ability is used in place of disability to acknowledge the social construction of ability.

Analysing decision-maker’s justifications of care orders for newborn children

Ms. Barbara Ruiken (University of Bergen)

This study examines how judiciary decision makers reason and justify intrusive child protection interventions such as when removing a child from their parent(s). Care order decisions regarding newborn babies challenge the relationship between state and individual. To separate parents and child limits the rights of all parties involved, but can be considered necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the newborn. This study analyzes a unique data material, which is all available care order decisions where the mother has a substance misuse problem (N=81) from 8 European countries (Austria, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Norway and Spain). I examine if and how individual decision-makers are similar or different in their assessment of these child protection cases, and second if similarities and differences between decision makers are influenced by the type of child protection system (child centric, family service or risk oriented).

The written care order decisions are subjected to a text analysis, focussing on the decision-makers assessments of risk and protective factors. This focus facilitates a comparison of data from different countries. By mapping both what the decision-makers find relevant and on what they place special emphasis when justifying their decisions, I am able to investigate how they use their discretionary powers in the reasoning process.

There is a gap in the literature regarding how child’s best interests decisions such as care orders are justified, and how risk and protective factors feature in these justifications. Discretion in the hands of decision-makers inherently contains a danger of similar cases receiving dissimilar treatment. However, discretion is necessary in situations that are highly dynamic and require individualistic treatment, such as care orders. In order to assess fair judicial treatment we need to know how discretionary decisions are taken. Substance misuse is an interesting entry point into this topic as it is prevalent in society (estimates are that 29% of the EU population have used illicit drugs in their lifetime (European Drug Report 2019)), established to potentially negatively impact children and carries a moral and normative bias.

The analysis found that the decision-makers sketch a comprehensive picture of the cases, including both risk and protective factors, through this acknowledging the complexity of the cases. Although the main emphasis is on risk factors, protective factors are also relevant in the discretionary reasoning process. Although there are many similarities across child protection systems, some differences stand out. Not all of these fit into the established child protection system classification.

Four themes stand out as relevant to nearly all decision-makers, these are (1) traits, behaviour and history of the mother, (2) the newborns vulnerabilities or lack thereof, (3) maltreatment of siblings of the newborn and previous child protection involvement and (4) the extended family and social setting. This convergence leads me to conclude that an informal standard for what are relevant considerations in these decisions has emerged in practice.

Analysis of breakdowns in foster care

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Background: From an ecosystem perspective, the diversity of factors associated with breakdown foster care leads to be considered a multi-factorial phenomenon, seldom explained by one single isolated factor, but by a set of factors that are interrelated at different levels, from micro- to macro-level. The analysis of foster care placements that have already ended allows us to study them from the perspective of their outcomes, while revealing the distinguishing elements that contribute to our understanding.

Objectives: The first objective of this study was to identify the rate of placement breakdown, understood as the unplanned termination of a family foster placement (non-kinship care), in Catalonia, the north-east of Spain, taking all cases in which the placement had already finished as a reference. The second objective was to explore the variables associated with placement termination at the child, family and system levels.

Participants: Data provided by caseworkers from 1,255 cases of foster placements were analysed as completed cases, closed between 2008 and 2018. In addition, 72 children aged 8 to 17 years old were asked about their assessment regarding both life satisfaction and main worries in family foster care.

Method: The study was carried out using a questionnaire to be filled in by professionals from the 13 foster care organisations to build an up-to-date reliable database with variables that could explain placement outcomes. Another questionnaire with open-ended questions was used also for children. Data was analysed based on bi- and multivariate data analysis, with the construction of a logistic regression model.

Results: Findings suggest the relevance of variables such as placement type, the child's age, length of stay in foster care, placement pathways before entering, and within, the protection system, type of abuse, characteristics of the foster family, and the relationship with the birth family. Children point out the lack of information they have while in care about their situation in care and future plans.

Conclusion: Breakdown occurs for reasons that are not only subject to behavioural issues or other characteristics of the child, but rather to a set of inter-related factors at different levels. These findings are intended to enhance professional practice and public policy-making and take part of how to evaluate and improve the quality in child welfare at a country level.

Annual FEPA Survey in Spain: the evolution of the attended youngsters profile and programs 2013-2019

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Aims

Most of the data compiled in Spain regard the childhood protection system. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research that collects information on the topic of young care leavers around the whole state. Mostly, there have been developed partial geographical studies in the past.

FEPA, the Spanish Federation for assisted housing and projects for care leavers, is an umbrella body with more than sixty non-profit member organizations around the country and a 20 years old path. It has a significant degree of commitment with knowledge and applied research on the care leavers field (Strategic Plan 2013-15 and 2017-2019).

Specific research about support services development in Catalonia from 1994 to 2012 was developed in collaboration with Girona University and the Catalan government (Montserrat, Casas, and Sisteró, 2014). Moreover, three editions on an emancipation resource map have been developed in 2013, 2017 (Observatorio del Tercer Sector and FEPA, 2013, 2017), the third edition is in an ongoing process. Furthermore, the longitudinal study CALEAMI concerning young care leaver transition to adulthood is being carried out together with Barcelona Autonomous University (Sala and Sanz, 2017).

It has been observed a substantial need of collecting information on the subject, the profile of attended youngsters, and the existing support programs to outline policies and improve the current program development. This is why FEPA develops an annual internal research among its member organizations based on a quantitative questionnaire that allows to have an evolutionary perspective.

In this communication, the data evolution on the Annual FEPA Survey from 2012-2019 is presented. The project arises from the whole network collaboration and has had in 2019 the involvement of 64 non-profit organizations. Observatorio del Tercer Sector, a research non-profit organization, carries out the data analysis of the information collected. Nowadays, there is not any other similar study in Spain.

To sum up, the main objective of the initiative is to provide regular information about the attention provided to young care leavers in Spain and on the evolution of the youngsters' profile and their needs based on the current different programs and services provided.

Methodology

The Annual FEPA Survey follows four main stages every year. First of all, an annual review of the questionnaire that is discussed in a FEPA workgroup that includes different non-profit organization members to reflect specificities over time. Secondly, the data gathering from an online survey sent to all FEPA members that covers: housing, training, labor, and legal support and also the youngsters profile attended from 16 to 23 years old in emancipation programs. Thirdly, the analysis of the information and report making. Finally, the direct and indirect dissemination activities, discussions based on the main results and findings, and policy proposals preparation on FEPA's board and knowledge specific workgroup.

Results

A synthesis of the main data from the last surveys can be found at FEPA's website. 3.599 youngsters were attended in 2019 by 523 professionals and 393 volunteers. Preliminary results show that there is an increasing number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Spain with an unbalanced presence in the territory. Additionally, 77% of youngsters were men and around 68% of the attended youngsters were studying. Only 28% work.

At this point, the data of origin becomes important: 7 out of 10 young people are of foreign origin, and therefore they face bureaucratic difficulties in obtaining a work permit: 74% of the 3.599 youngsters do not have it.

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Are the voices of young people living in out-of-home care represented in research examining their health?: A systematic review of the literature.

Dr. Rachael Green (Monash University), Prof. Helen Skouteris (Monash University), Ms. Madelaine Smales (Monash University)

Aim: There are strong imperatives for young people living in out-of-home care (OoHC) to exercise their right to participate in health-related decision making and health care practices to foster better health outcomes. However, to the authors' knowledge there has been no previous review of the literature examining the extent to which children have been enabled to participate in such research or to which children's voices have been heard in determining health status and health needs. This systematic review aimed to explore if and how the voices of young people in OoHC are represented in research examining their health.

Method: A systematic search of the literature was undertaken to identify all available papers examining the health status or healthcare needs of young people living in OoHC (aged 0-18 years). Studies were identified through electronic literature searching of the following databases: Ovid MEDLINE, PsychINFO, Social Services Abstracts, and CINAHL. The search strategy included terms such as 'children', 'health', 'perceptions', and 'out-of-home care'.

Results: A total of 39 studies met the inclusion criteria. In 18 of the 39 studies reviewed, data collection did not allow for the voice of young people but relied on carer report (17 studies) or clinician observation (one study) alone. There were 20 studies where data were collected directly from young people predominantly through standardised screening questionnaires only (12 studies) or in combination with standardised clinical assessment interviews (7 studies) designed to measure children's social, emotional, developmental or general health status. Only three studies involved directly interviewing young people about their perspectives on what health means to them.

Conclusion: This review found that researchers exploring health needs and/or health status of young people living in OoHC have so far failed to adopt methods to adequately give voice to children's experiences, opinions, concerns, questions and preferences about health. The studies reviewed stand in contrast to emerging research that advocates the importance of recognising young people as independent beings who have agency over their health outcomes and health related decisions. Young people are missing the opportunity to contribute their unique perspectives as co-researchers that can lead to more creative and relevant solutions or tailored services that truly meet their needs. Young advocates from OoHC in Australia have adopted the centuries old principle of 'nothing about us without us'. This might well serve as a guide for future academic and clinical researchers of health in OoHC.

Assessing Quality of Therapeutic Residential Care in Portugal

Dr. Rita Ferreira (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto - Group for research and intervention in foster care and adoption), Prof. Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo)

Background: In Portugal, children and youth in Residential Care present a high prevalence of mental health problems, addictive behaviors, and concurrent learning difficulties. This child/youth profile requires a specialized intervention and the development of therapeutic residential care (TRC). Nevertheless, currently in Portugal, there are only six TRC centres. TRC involves intentional planning and building a multidimensional environment. This is materialized in quality standards, such as: focus on outcomes; duration of stay; post-exit support; prevent seclusion and restraint; relationship with children' s birth families; empower youth; provide culturally and linguistically competent services; trauma-informed care; transition to adulthood; informed use of psychotropic medications; create organizational cultures supportive of best practices; supervision; healthy adult-youth interaction as modeling. A focus on the quality of the care provided is justified because children/youth in RC are a specially vulnerable population. However, there are no studies on TRC quality, in Portugal. This poster will present the methodological design of a research project aimed at assessing TRC in Portugal.
Objectives: This study has two main goals: to assess the quality of Portuguese's TRC and define profiles of the psychological adjustment and needs of youth placed. This study also aims at exploring the relationship between child/youth individual variables (e.g., psychological adjustment, well-being, addictive behaviors), and the evaluation of the quality of the TRC centre.

Methodology: The sample includes all TRC facilities existing in Portugal, on a total of 6. Eighty youngsters (35 girls and 45 boys) aged between 11 and 18 years old, and 120 professionals will respond to an interview, as part of a comprehensive assessment system for evaluating the quality of TRC – ARQUA-Pr for TRC, which will be adapted and validated for the Portuguese situation. Youngsters in TRC will also fill in several questionnaires in order to assess positive indicators of psychological adjustment (self-esteem, prosocial skills, personal well-being, and positive affect), as well as signs of mental health needs and psychopathological symptoms (internalization and externalizing problems, depressive symptoms, addicted behaviors, and negative affectivity). Two moments of data collection are foreseen, a year apart.

Results/Conclusions: As expected outcomes, this study will provide scientific evidence on TRC quality assessment in Portugal, as well as the specific needs of children and youth placed in TRC. It is worth noting that currently, Portugal is shifting from a system almost exclusively relying upon non-specialized RC to a system in which the family foster care network is expanding and TRC is specializing. Assessing the quality of the services provided in alternative care for children and youth is thus critical to assure an adequate change process. This study will contribute to this aim.

Associations between secure residential care and positive behavioral change in adolescent boys and girls

Mr. Raymond Gutterswijk (iHUB alliance of youth care, mental health care, and educational organizations), Prof. Chris Kuiper (University of Amsterdam), Prof. Annemiek Harder (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Dr. Bruno Bocanegra (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Dr. Frank van der Horst (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Prof. Peter Prinzie (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

During this collective paper presentation, three PhD students present their findings with regard to children and young people in residential youth care. In the present study behavioral change of adolescents in secure residential youth care (SRC) was investigated in a sample of 239 Dutch adolescents (*M* age = 15.59 years,*SD* = 1.36 years, 54.9% girls).

Although several meta-analyses have shown that adolescents can benefit from treatment in a residential youth care facility, for various reasons, residential treatment of youth has been heavily criticized in recent years. The possible iatrogenic effects of group care are an essential element of this criticism. In order to make treatment in residential youth care as effective as possible, various developments of the treatment offered have taken place in recent years, for example the development of gender-specific care, since girls are said to have different risks and treatment needs than boys.

In an attempt to evaluate the effect of gender on the outcomes of secure residential youth care, the effectiveness of gender-specific SRC for girls, was compared to the effectiveness of ‘regular’ SRC for girls. Furthermore, results of ‘regular’ SRC for adolescent girls was also compared to the results of ‘regular’ SRC for adolescent boys.

Pretest, posttest and follow-up (six months after discharge) measurements were carried out for internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems, PTSD symptoms, emotion regulation, perceived competence and family problems. Comparisons were made between girls in gender-specific care, and girls and boys in regular care. The results were examined at group level, using MANCOVA, ANCOVA’s and bootstrapped planned contrast, and at case level, using the Reliable Change Index. At the group level, the analyses revealed higher effectiveness of gender-specific care for girls than regular care for girls, in diminishing externalizing behavioral problems. No other differences in effectiveness between gender-specific care and regular care for girls were found, nor for boys *vs* girls in regular care. At the individual level, depending on the outcome measures, 0% to 58% of the adolescents reported improvement during their stay in secure residential care, 25% to 88% showed no change, and 0% to 39% reported deterioration. The iatrogenic effects could indicate a poor match between the specific needs of these adolescents and the treatment they received. Moreover, added value of gender-specific care is only partly confirmed. Overall, more similarities than differences were found between boys and girls.

Attachment in family foster care: Literature review of associated characteristics

Ms. Delphine West (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Prof. Johan Vanderfaeillie (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Ms. Lisa Van Hove (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Ms. Laura Gypen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Dr. Frank Van Holen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Foster children often had negative experiences in the past, which can lead to attachment problems. In their meta-analysis, Van den Dries, Juffer, van IJzendoorn, and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2009) found that foster children were more often disorganized attached when compared to the general population. It is to be expected that the quality of attachment between foster children and there foster parents is related to various factors. However, research into which factors are associated with the development of secure attachment is scarce. Using the PRISMA method, a total of 13 articles were included in this review. This review provides an overview of the influencing characteristics on the quality of attachment between foster carers and foster children and factors related to the placement and former home environment. In our review, the foster carers' characteristics were more important than characteristics of the foster child and placement when it comes to developing a secure attachment with the foster parents. The most consensus, although not unanimous, existed on the fact that a positive, sensitive parenting style of foster parents was positively related to a secure attachment between foster children and their foster carers.

Attachment representations and reflective functioning among parents involved with Child Protection Services: Do they predict ongoing harm? Findings from a pilot study.

Dr. Sarah Whitcombe-Dobbs (University of Canterbury), Prof. Michael Tarren-Sweeney (University of Canterbury), Prof. Philip Schluter (University of Canterbury)

BACKGROUND: Parental Reflective Functioning (PRF) has been associated with parenting behaviour and sensitivity among populations of high-risk parents, suggesting that it may be key in the intergenerational transmission of trauma. However, PRF has not been tested for its potential to predict subsequent harmful parenting among parents who have already neglected or abused their children.

OBJECTIVE: This study aimed to identify whether PRF was associated with subsequent notifications of harm among a population of parents involved with Child Protective Services (CPS).

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING: Twenty-six CPS-involved parents were recruited to the study, all of whom retained custody of their youngest child at the time of initial assessment. All data were collected in participants' homes or the home of a participant's family member.

METHODS: Comprehensive data regarding CPS parents' background experiences, PRF and demographic data were gathered during a three-hour, multiple-session baseline assessment. Outcome data were subsequent notifications of harm to CPS. PRF and background experiences were examined as potential predictors.

RESULTS: PRF was not associated with subsequent notifications of harm among the study participants. Likewise, cumulative risk scores were not significantly associated with subsequent harmful parenting. Two background factors predicted CPS notifications, having a higher number of children and the parent reporting a personal history of neglect.

CONCLUSION: Among a small group of CPS-involved parents, those with low PRF did not go on to harm their children at higher rates than parents with more typical PRF scores. PRF may interact with other risk factors for individual parents in ways that are not yet clearly delineated by the evidence to date. Given the small sample size of this pilot study, this finding needs to be tested among a larger group of CPS-involved parents.

Attitudes of child social protection workers in Czech Republic - 30 years after Velvet Revolution

Dr. Hana Pazlarova (Charles University, Prague), Prof. Pavel Navratil (Masaryk University, Brno), Prof. Oldrich Matousek (Charles University, Prague), Prof. Tatiana Matulayova (Palacky University, olomouc)

The social and legal protection of children was perceived by the communist regime as part of state control. The social workers' reputation and self-image were seriously damaged by this role. With the restoration of democracy it was necessary to change the picture of social-legal protection of children. Thirty years after the political changes, representative research was conducted among nearly 700 social workers, focusing on their attitudes to the profession and the development of the professionalisation of social work. The presentation will focus on the attitudes of more than 80 social-legal protection workers. Using structured interviews, we are looking for an answer to the question of how they perceive social work with children after 30 years in a free society? The interviews were conducted by telephone and the data were analysed in the SPSS program.

Attitudes of Residential Care Facility Directors Towards the Need for Professional Accreditation and Licensing of Caregivers

Ms. Anna Gerasimenko (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute), Ms. Anna Gerasimenko (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute)

Background

The residential care facilities for at-risk children described in this study are out-of-home frameworks provided by the social service system to care for children whose family and community environments are unable to adequately meet their needs in various areas. The caregivers working in these facilities are the key figures responsible for their daily care. Residential caregivers spend almost all of the day with the children, and assist in all areas of their daily functioning. Apart from the role of caring for and supervising the children, their work involves parenting tasks such as providing emotional support and acceptance. However, evidence has shown that the caregivers exhibit a high rate of burnout and turnover, which begs the question of whether they receive adequate training and support to perform their job in a way that meets the children's needs. The need to invest efforts to upgrade the position of caregivers into a recognized profession is gaining momentum in Israel.

Aim

The present research examined the attitudes of the directors of residential facilities towards accreditation and professionalization of the role of residential caregivers.

Method

The study was commissioned by the Israeli Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services. The study method was a survey of the directors of all the residential facilities under the ministry's responsibility. The survey quantified the directors' attitudes towards making the role of a residential caregiver as a recognized, licensed and certified profession, and asked the respondents to give reasons for their responses. It also collected data about the characteristics of the facilities. Respondents completed the questionnaire anonymously. The data were collected from June to August 2017. Of the 95 directors to whom we sent questionnaires, 75 completed them (response rate of 79%).

Results

Most of the directors believe that the position of a residential caregiver should become a profession with formal training and licensing, and that the job requires high standards of personal attributes and professional skills. Some directors were ambivalent due to the nature of the job, which they reported requires young and highly motivated workers, who can establish a close relationship with the children.

The impact of the facilities' characteristics on the directors' attitudes towards professionalization of the role of the residential caregivers was examined using a regression model, which included the operational design of the facility, the type of facility, and the ratio of caregivers to children in the facility as explanatory variables. The attitudes of residential facility directors can be predicted: the operational model of the care facilities has an effect on the attitudes of the directors towards professionalizing the role of the residential caregivers. The rate of directors in the group design of the facility who believe that the role of the caregiver should become a recognized profession is higher than the rate of directors in the family-style design of the facility who believe so.

Discussion and conclusion

Caregivers are expected to support children to develop their personalities, independence, self-esteem and self-confidence, while also helping them to develop their talents, abilities and interpersonal skills. This was a preliminary study in Israel on the professionalization of residential caregivers and was intended to contribute to establishing the status and professionalism of residential caregivers of children and youth. The study discusses

the possibility that accreditation and professionalization of the role of the caregiver working in residential facilities in Israel could provide a solution to the difficulties and challenges faced by caregivers in the group residential care design, and two working models are proposed.

Australian residential care: Towards national leadership in policy, practice and research

Dr. Patricia McNamara (University of Melbourne), Ms. Shelley Wall (Infinity Community Solutions Queensland)

In Australia, residential care is almost exclusively utilised to provide placements for children and young people in the statutory child welfare system. Care is usually provided for up to four children in family homes within the community. Residential care makes up only 6% (approximately) of Australian out-of-home care (OOHC) placements overall (AIHW, 2020). Models self-identifying as therapeutic are gradually becoming embedded within Australian residential care. Australian programs are still, however, often considered a last resort for ”hard cases”. Outcomes have been poor, with many former residents becoming homeless, unemployed and/or engaged in mental health and judicial systems after exiting residential care. Educational achievements during and post-care have been below normative levels.

An identified constraint to achievement of best possible outcomes from Australian residential care is lack of national leadership in the sector. This has given rise to the research in progress presented here.

Rationale: Children, young people and families using residential care have often been described as some of the most vulnerable cohorts in Australia (Victorian Ombudsman, 2020). Australian residential care, however, currently lacks federal leadership around policy, practice and research. Establishment and oversight of national protocols and practice standards especially, have become even more urgent since the arrival of the COVID19 pandemic (AIHW, 2021). The National Therapeutic Residential Care Alliance (NTRCA) is committed to improving federal leadership in in residential care, especially within therapeutic programs.

Aim of the research: The overarching aim of this scoping study is to develop an evidenced-based platform of research, policy and practice to support advocacy for national leadership in the Australian residential care sector.

Methods: This national scoping of TRC research policy and practice issues has an action research design. It will take place across three semi-structured focus group conversations with up to 10 NTRCA Reference Group members, led by the two authors. Iterative findings will be subject to content and thematic analysis along with participant-checking; refinement of an NTRCA advocacy document on this issue will be the primary output. Human Research Ethics approval to conduct this study has been sought from the from La Trobe University.

Findings: This presentation will focus on key themes emergent from the three NTRCA conversations around residential care research, policy and practice. Current issues likely to be addressed include:

Research: There remains a lack of formal evidence regarding outcomes of Australian therapeutic residential care (TRC). Elements such as goodness of fit between the carefully assessed needs of a prospective resident and the specific program, an explicit and congruently implemented theory of change and effective partnering with families are associated with improved residential care outcomes (Whittaker Holmes and dal Valle, 2015).

Policy:Advent of therapeutic approaches to residential care has given rise to higher aspirations for young residents and their families. Australian state and territory policy reflects this, especially in relation to higher education and training benchmarks for workers. Education for young people too, is becoming better resourced, resultant in a substantial increase in care leavers transitioning to tertiary education (Raising Expectations www.cfecfw.org.au)

*Practice:*Size of homes, mix of residents, separation of siblings and levels of therapeutic support are contested issues, as is the incidence of sexual exploitation and assault in residential care, investigated in a recent report by the Victorian Ombudsman (2020).

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Beliefs and Attitudes about Family Foster Care in Portugal: the public's perspective

Ms. Ana Marreiros (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisboa, Portugal), Dr. Joana Baptista (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisboa, Portugal), Dr. Sibila Marques (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisboa, Portugal)

Objective: to analyze the beliefs and attitudes towards Family Foster Care in the general population, testing the associations between these and the intention to become a foster family.
Methodology: A self-report questionnaire, the Beliefs and Attitudes to Family Foster Care Questionnaire (Marreiros, Baptista, & Marques, 2019), was developed to assess the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and intention to be a foster family. It isn't known in the literature a single instrument, validated and addressed to the general population, assessing these variables. The sample consisted of 232 participants: 171 are female and 53 are male, aged between 30 and 65 years old. With regard to educational qualifications, 72.4% of the participants had training at higher education level and 27.6% had an education level equal to or lower than the 12th year. Being a correlational study, descriptive statistics were used as an analytical strategy, followed by the exploration of associations between the variables under study.
Results: The majority of participants (n = 186, 80.2%) indicated that they had no intention of becoming a foster family. Between the Intention variable and the Sociodemographic variables under study, there were statistically significant associations in the variables Age (X2 = 0.258, sig = 0.003 <□ = 0.05), Scholar qualifications (Ø = - 0.144, sig = 0.025) and having (not having) children (Ø = - 0.165, sig = 0.010). With regard to the Knowledge variable, the association between the participants' perceived knowledge about family foster care and their Intention to become a foster family, there was a positive (X2 = 0.234) and statistically significant (Sig = 0.010 <□ = 0.05) correlation between the variables. Regarding to the Beliefs, the participants' responses (M=28.15) were between the second and third points of the response scale (five-point scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree), with the lowest values of the scale correspond to a more positive view of family care. With regard to the relationship between the participants' beliefs about foster care and the intention to become a foster family, a positive (Rs = 0.231) and statistically significant (Sig = 0.000 <□ = 0.05) association was found. When trying to test the associations between beliefs and sociodemographics, it was found a negative correlation (Rs = - 0.246) although statistically significant (Sig = 0.000) between the beliefs and scholar qualifications of the participants. The same trend was observed regarding the association between beliefs and perceived knowledge (Rs = - 0.224, Sig = 0.001). With regard to the association between attitudes towards family foster care and the intention to be a foster family, there are no statistically significant correlations (Rs = 0.093, Sig = 0.160). The averages obtained in each dimension of the Attitudes scale, in all of them the values are close to the lower limit of the scale, which correspond to a positive idea and therefore to a favorable attitude towards the family foster care.

Conclusions: The results demonstrate that the public's perceived knowledge about family foster care is low and the access to information about this subject is considered difficult to obtain. Also, the Beliefs reveal a strong association with the Intention to be a foster family and the Attitudes reveal to be associated only with the Beliefs and not with the Intention. Therefore, it is concluded that a serious investment should be made, on one hand, in increasing the knowledge of the public about foster care through a strong and wide dissemination of information and, on the other hand, the strategies for attracting families to foster care in the general population should be designed to reinforce positive beliefs about family foster care.

Beyond Instrumentalism: A reflection on the collective participation of young people in care.

Dr. Rebecca Jackson (UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway), Dr. Bernadine Brady (UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway), Dr. Cormac Forkan (UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway), Dr. Edel Tierney (UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway), Dr. Danielle Kennan (UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway)

This paper presents the findings of an abductive exploration of collective participation for young people in care, which was facilitated by Irelands Child and Family Agency, in partnership with EPIC, an independent advocacy service. This collective model aimed to capture the perspectives of young people to inform the development of policy and service in practices that are underpinned by a rights-based approach as framed by the Lundy Model (2007). A strong rationale for the collective participation of young people in care is evident given the discussion within literature regarding the prevalence of poor longitudinal outcomes for care leavers, challenging experiences, and the findings of statutory reports that highlight failings within childcare systems. However, discussions in the general literature reveal that participation may not promote any meaningful change in the circumstances of childhood for those young people that participate. This raises questions regarding the validity of participatory practice. It has been suggested that the under theorisation of participation, a lack of meaningful criticism of rights in practice and the under representation of young people's perspectives in terms of what makes participation meaningful hinders a consideration of the appropriate objectives and parameters of practice.

Aim: Given the limitations regarding the outcomes of participation, and the gaps in understanding identified in literature, this study aimed to reflect on the attainment of participation in terms of the requirements of Article 12 (UNCRC 1989), and subsequently refract the findings through a theoretical lens.

Methodology: This was a qualitative study in which the perspectives of twenty-eight young participants were sought through focus groups in which questions were creatively framed. Twenty practitioners also took part in semi-structured interviews. The resulting data was analysed in a process of abductive reflection through sequential rounds of deductive analysis using a framework approach. The first round of analysis explored the attainment of rights in terms of the Lundy Model's concepts of space, voice, audience and influence. As the frame derived from this model did not capture all data generated, a second round of analysis using a framework derived from Honneth's concepts of Recognition, and Disrespect.

Findings: This study found that practice underpinned by a rights-based model was of utility in supporting young people in care to contribute to service development. However, the abductive application of theory allowed for fuller reflection on the meaningfulness of participation for the young people beyond an evaluation of their participative rights attained in practice. A synthesis of the two rounds of analysis, and a reflection on the context in which practice is embedded revealed that participatory practice is limited in terms of production of meaningful change in the young people's experience of care as challenging circumstances framed by the concept of disrespect are often structured by issues that cannot be addressed by tweaks to the technicalities of practice.

Conclusion: This study concludes that Article 12 translated form principle to practice is contextually blind. Therefore, its uncritical application in practice may miss the opportunity to affect change or meaningful improvement to challenges inherent to the care system. This would require the amplification of young people's voices and the extension of accountability beyond the confines of practices operational boundaries. However, despite limitations to the extent of their influence on issues that affect them, the participative space was meaningful for the young people in that it allowed them access alternative sources of recognition that may be experienced as insufficient at times throughout their care journey. Participation framed by theory in this way centres the experiences that are available through engagement in processes of participation beyond instrumentality

with implications for future practice.

Birth Families in Life Story Narratives of Adult Adoptees Who Are Now Parents

Dr. Irina Sirbu (University of East Anglia), Prof. Elsbeth Neil (Professor of Social Work, Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia), Dr. Julia Rimmer (University of East Anglia)

Background/Aims

The majority of children adopted in England and Wales within the last 30 years come from child welfare (care) backgrounds of adversity. Removed from birth families and subsequently placed within their adoptive families, an individualised 'contact plan' will be agreed to support adoptees' understanding of their origins and maintenance of connections with birth families, as this is recognised to be important to their wellbeing and identity, and for developing an internally coherent narrative and integral sense of self. Contact is usually in the form of a routine exchange of letters (via a letterbox system), sometimes supplemented with face-to-face meetings with siblings and/or birth parents or grandparents. Irrespective of what actual post-adoption contact adopted children and young people may have, their birth family are likely to remain psychologically present to them to some extent. Becoming a parent may stir adoptees in their thinking around birth families and as a result, adult adoptees might need to revisit and re-write narratives around their birth families, incorporating them into their larger life stories. The present paper seeks to understand how birth families are represented in life story narratives of adult adoptees who are parents and the extent to which such narratives are resolved narratively and psychologically.

Method

We draw upon data from a broader, two-generational study (parents who were adopted, and adoptive parents who are now grandparents) into the later lives of adoptive families in England and Wales. The study is taking a narrative psychology approach and employed adapted versions of McAdams' Life Story Interview Method (1995) to elicit narratives. We here focus upon our analysis of the interviews with adopted adults who are now parents, conducted with 40 adoptees (20 women and 20 men) adopted in England and Wales, predominantly in the last 30 years. Narratives are analysed within and across cases to here examine the extent to, and ways in which adoptee's birth families feature and are presented in their life stories and the outcomes of such narratives.

Findings

We share here preliminary findings from our ongoing narrative analysis. We have interrogated the degree to which narratives around birth family are coherent, integrated and resolved, or otherwise. We present here a typology of narratives by level of contact/information about birth families in adulthood, *the degree of resolution* of narratives about birth families (is there a resolved narrative about birth family or not, and why?), and their *outcome* (positively resolved, negatively resolved, narratives are still work in progress, or unchanged due to the adoptees having no interest or not knowing anything about their birth families).

We further explore this typology to understand where and when birth families figure in adoptee life stories, how they are characterised, what imagery is employed, the types of relationships described and how these change over life and are impacted by key events and experiences in adoptees' lives such as contacting or finding out more information about birth families, and adoptees becoming parents. Highlighting the significance of gender in constructing stories about oneself, we will also explore the differences between the narratives of mothers and fathers.

We also highlight the factors that positively affect the development of coherent/resolved narratives/identities: e.g. communicative openness in adoptive families, support in accessing information about birth families, therapeutic support to help adult adoptees reach a resolved narrative about their birth families. The findings will be of interest to adoptees, adoptive and birth families, professionals working with them and those exploring theories and methods of narrative identity in complex family forms where identity is uncertain and multifaceted.

Birth Family Connections: The Perspective of Young Adults who Grew up in Permanent Foster Care

Ms. Sinéad Whiting (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin)

Objective:

In this presentation I will introduce initial findings about the lived experiences of connections to birth family for young adults who grew up in permanent, legal *and/or* relational, foster care. These findings are from my on-going PhD study, investigating the lived experiences of legal *and/or* relational permanence for young adults who grew up in long-term foster care in Ireland. The study participants, now in their 20s, discuss their experiences of birth family connections and how they have navigated these often complex relationships while maintaining strong ties to their long-term foster family. These lived experiences provide insights into the significance of birth family connections for young people growing up in permanent foster care. Diverse experiences are recounted, ranging from face-to-face meetings to intermittent connections through social media, but common patterns are identified.

Background:

Negotiating relationships with birth family, for care-experienced youth is complex. Numerous studies highlight this complexity noting that it can be both positive and negative (Boyle, 2017). The issues are complex but the young people's wish for connection is a consistent finding (Atwool: 2013) even for those with strong attachments to their foster carers (Fernandez: 2007). Relationships between care experienced adults and their birth families are important in childhood, but also continue to carry emotional significance, into adulthood (Boddy: 2019; Fargas-Malet &McSherry, 2020).

Current literature does not reflect the voice of care experienced young adults who grew up in permanent, legal and/or relational, foster homes. Singer et al (2013) note that while there is a strong literature base focusing on the needs of young adults as they transition out of care into adulthood these studies often focus upon practical needs e.g. housing, education, economic independence, and rarely examine issues of a psychosocial nature such as the importance of relationships and meaningful connections. Havlicek's (2021) systematic review of US based literature relating to birth-parent and foster-youth relationships, before and after aging-out of care, notes that many studies detail the type of contact young people have with their birth parents but fewer studies comment on the types of support young people gain from these connections.

In my PhD Study, investigating the lived experience of permanence for young adults who grew up in long-term foster care in Ireland, permanence has been conceptualised as either *legal, i.e.*adoption-from-care, or *relational,* defined by McSherry (2018:214) as "an enduring and supportive relationship between a young person and a caring adult". Drawing on this inclusive concept of permanence allows for an investigation of a range of lived experiences. The lived experience of birth family connections and how care experienced young adults, who grew up in either legally or relationally permanent foster care, navigate membership of two-family units during the transition to adulthood, rarely features in the literature.

Method

In depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with twenty-two young adults in their 20s who grew up in long-term stable foster care in Ireland. The aim was to investigate the lived experience of both legal and relational permanence. All the participants had been living with their foster carers for at least 5 years prior to turning 18 years of age. Thematic analysis has been used to uncover insights and to identify patterns in the young adult's lived experiences. Contact with birth family has been identified as a common thread.

Findings:

Findings relate to the young adults' lived experience of:

- Connections with their birth family, including birth parents, siblings and extended family, while growing up.
- The role of birth family in the lives of the young adults during their transition to adulthood.
- Permanence in their foster family and how this impacts the young peoples' connections with birth family.

Birth Parent Involvement in African American Children Kinship Care Families: The Pilot Study

Dr. Tyreasa Washington (University of North Carolina at Greensboro), Dr. Quenette Walton (University of Houston), Ms. Kenya Downing (University of North Carolina at Greensboro), Ms. Lisa Taylor (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)

Background and Purpose: Many children who experience kinship care suffer from a host of negative outcomes related to social skill deficits, academic underachievement, and behavior problems (BP) including mental health problems, substance use, criminal justice problems, and placement disruptions. Our previous research found that parental involvement of birth parents offset some of the risks to kinship care children's social competence (SC) and academic competence (AC) and their risk of BP . Despite the positive outcomes of our studies, the mechanisms that account for the effect of parental involvement on SC, AC, and BP are not clear. Thus, we conducted a qualitative pilot study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how experiences in kinship care families affect the social, academic, and behavioral outcomes of African American (AA) children ages 5-12. The research question for this pilot study is as followed: *How does parental involvementoperate in the lives of kinship care families?*

Methods:T**his pilot study used**phenomenology to**examine** the meaning of parental involvement among African American kinship care families. A total of 17in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted in participants' homes, social service agencies, or locations participants requested, such as community centers or libraries (12 AA caregiver interviews; 5 AA birth parents interviews). This study was a collaboration with 3 child welfare agencies and 1 child development agency. The collaborators assisted with recruitment (i.e. provided list of potential participants; hosted recruitment booths at their agencies). Also, participants were recruited via flyer postings in the community, on social media outlets, and an email listserv (e.g., grandparents support groups). Interviews were between 90-120 minutes and a $35 incentive was provided. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the phenomenological methods suggested by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2007).

Results: Findings indicate that caregivers and birth parents experienced the role of co-parenting differently (i.e. parental involvement). Also, across kinship care families there were varying levels of parental involvement; for example, visiting and/or doing activities with children 5 to 6 times per month vs. 1 time per year or never. For kinship care families with higher parental involvement, the caregivers provided boundaries and expectations of birth parents when they engaged with children. Both caregivers and birth parents conveyed concerns for the children's overall well-being, and caregivers expressed a strong commitment to raising children despite financial and other challenges. Although, several caregiver's perceived themselves as isolated and having little to no support in raising children, they also reported formal and informal supports other than birth parents (e.g., family members, friends, school officials).

Implications: The pilot study findings indicate kinship care families that have been able to successfully integrate birth parents, have set clear boundaries and expectations. Given the current study findings and previous study findings concerning the association between birth parent involvement and children's SC, AC, and BP; practitioners should help facilitate positive interactions among biological parents, caregivers, and children to foster children's competence and behavioral health.

Born into Care: family court decisions for an increasing number of new-born babies in England and Wales

Prof. Karen Broadhurst (Lancaster), Dr. Bachar Alrouh (Lancaster University), Dr. Linda Cusworth (Centre for Child and Family Justice Research, Lancaster University), Dr. Lucy Griffiths (Swansea University), Dr. Rhodri Johnson (Swansea University), Mr. Ashley Akabari (Swansea University), Prof. David Ford (Swansea University)

Objectives: Findings are presented from the “Born into Care” series, England and Wales, published by the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (FJ0). The overarching aim of the research was to quantify the volume and proportion of cases of new-born babies subject to care proceedings under s.31 in England and Wales, and to describe and compare the range of legal order outcomes for the very youngest children at the close of care proceedings and 12 months beyond. Despite the emphasis in England and Wales on the developmental salience of infancy, prior to this research, new-born babies were largely a hidden population given that national statistics group all infants according to the category “aged less than 1 year”. The research was completed by the Nuffield FJO Data Partnership. The Data Partnership (Lancaster and Swansea Universities) aims to demonstrate the value of large-scale administrative data sets, whilst at the same time, addressing pressing stakeholder questions about the impact of the family justice system on children and families.

Methods: The primary source of data was full service population electronic case management data held by Cafcass England and Cafcass Wales concerning all s.31 care proceedings (from 2010/11) for infants (aged less than 12 months of age). The data was made available to the researchers in anonymised format through the secure environment of the SAIL Databank at Swansea University. Permission for use of this administrative data for a different purpose was granted by both practice agencies. Population estimates and live birth data produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) were used to calculate incidence rates according to year and child age band (mid-year population estimates for children and annual live births).

Data was restructured to link children to their legal order outcome data over time, to examine the range of legal orders made by the courts at the close of care proceedings, and 12 months beyond. Given this was the first descriptive study of new-borns in the family courts in England and Wales, analysis comprised the calculation of volumes, frequencies and incidence rates.

Results: An increasing number of new-born babies are appearing as subjects in care proceedings in England and Wales, over time. In both countries more than half of all infant cases, are now issued within 4 weeks of birth. Overall, incidence rates are higher in Wales, than they are in England. Wales makes far less use of the full range of legal order options available under the Children Act 1989, with a surprisingly high number of infants subject to care orders at the close of care proceedings.

Conclusion: The presentation concludes by discussing the reasons for increasing incidence rates, but also why the Welsh family courts appear to use care orders for infants returned home and those placed with kin, drawing on consultative discussions with stakeholders. Issues of trust between different professional actors in the family justice system are highlighted, which appear to influence final decisions for children. The implications in the short and longer-term are discussed for the very youngest infants in the family justice system in England and Wales.

Limitations:given the research used administrative data collected routinely by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (England and Wales) the range of variables are necessarily limited. A data quality report is presented as part of the presentation.

Born into Care: pathways and outcomes for infants who become looked after in Scotland

Dr. Linda Cusworth (Centre for Child and Family Justice Research, Lancaster University), Dr. Helen Whincup (University of Stirling), Prof. Nina Biehal (Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York)

Background: Official statistics show that in March 2018, 14,738 children were looked after in Scotland, many of whom were young when they entered care (Scottish Government, 2019). Despite the numbers, until recently little was known about children's experiences and pathways through the care system; the balance of compulsory and voluntary interventions; times and routes to permanence; and what factors influence outcomes.

Permanently Progressing? Building secure futures for children in Scotland is the first study in Scotland to investigate decision making, permanence, progress, outcomes and belonging for children who became looked after aged five or under. A significant proportion of these children become looked after away from home in the first few weeks after birth. It is important to understand more about the circumstances in which accommodation occurs, and the pathways and outcomes for these children.

Methods: Anonymised child-level data (Children Looked After Statistics) was provided by the Scottish Government on the total cohort of 1,355 children in all 32 local authorities who started to be looked after away from home in 2012-13 aged five and under. Pathways and timescales to permanence were tracked between 2012-2016 using this administrative data. For a sub-group of 433 children, information on histories, progress and outcomes 3-4 years after they became looked after was gathered from surveys of adoptive parents, foster and kinship carers, and social workers.

Results/conclusion: This paper will discuss key findings from the study, in relation to those who became looked after soon after birth. Nearly half of those looked after away from home were under one year old when removed from parents, including 250 (18%) less than seven days old. These younger children were more likely to be looked after on an emergency basis, less likely to be placed with kinship carers, and more likely to have been adopted 3-4 years later, than those looked after when older. The complementary use of survey and administrative data is important. Evidence from the surveys of carers and social workers enhances our understanding of the circumstances around removal (including experience of maltreatment, removal of siblings, and parental substance misuse), and suggests that outcomes (emotional, behavioural and attachment) were generally better for children who were accommodated and placed with carers and adoptive parents at an earlier age and remained there.

Born into Care: towards inclusive guidelines when family court action is taken at birth to safeguard infants.

Ms. Claire Mason (Centre for Child and Family Justice Research, Lancaster University), Prof. Karen Broadhurst (Lancaster), Prof. Harriet Ward (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Dr. Lisa Holmes (Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

Objectives:the study aimed to develop inclusive, evidence-informed guidelines that inform professional practice, when care proceedings are issued immediately following an infant's birth. A three-stage research process resulted in the new guidelines which comprised: a) local area protocols review and review of the relevant literature; b) in-depth qualitative research in 8 local authority and partner health trusts in England and Wales; c) an intensive online consensus building process to agree a new set of guidelines. The research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, was undertaken in response to national concerns (England and Wales) about the rising numbers of new-borns coming before the family courts, but insufficient national guidance to inform safe, ethical and effective practice.

Methods:a review of local area protocols was first completed, along with a review of the published research on experiences of infant removals at birth and responses to perinatal loss. This was followed by extensive qualitative research in 8 local authority areas/health trusts in England and Wales. Focus groups and interviews (face-to-face and on-line; 2020-2021) took place with social workers (local authority and Cafcass); midwives, local authority lawyers, foster carers, and parents. Three members of the research team analysed the data, using methods of thematic analysis, to identity core elements of inter-agency practice requiring change. Findings across all qualitative data, protocols and research reviews were then integrated. A sub-set of participants (n=50; June-July 2021), alongside national strategic leads were then invited to an online intensive consensus building process, comprising a series of facilitated workshops to consider the research findings and to work towards an agreed set of national guidelines, for piloting.

Findings:findings suggested a shared understanding amongst professionals and parents regarding best practice, but also uncovered highly consistent findings regarding current shortfalls in practice. A lack of timely, effective and inclusive planning with parents during pregnancy, was a consistent concern, which resulted in considerable distress for parents, particularly birth mothers in the immediate post-partum period, but also emergency placements for infants following their birth. In many cases, foster carers were not known to/or introduced to parents and infant, until after an infant's birth. There was also tension around roles and responsibilities regarding which professional, should supervise mother and baby on the maternity ward, prior to discharge to foster carers. Lack of planning also undermined the role of specialist social workers (Cafcass social workers) who advise the court, because of insufficient time to fully assess option for infants. A lack of sensitivity to the needs of parents and ensuring all parents had a birth companion who could provide support following separation from her baby, was also agreed as critical. Together, the findings enabled the team to pin-point birth planning and the immediate post-natal period as the focus of new guidance.

Through an intensive online problem-solving and consensus building process, new guidelines were agreed. Given budget constraints, the guidelines centred on making adjustments to routine practice with limited supplementary requirements. The consensus building process aimed to work through points of disagreement. Final inclusive guidelines were developed with the following over-arching aims: a) improving timely, sensitive and inclusive decision-making and planning between children's services, midwifery services, foster carers and family; b) ensuring birth companion support for birth mothers in the maternity setting and beyond; c) agreeing immediate infant-parent contact arrangements.

Conclusions:it is possible to tackle sensitive practice issues, through careful qualitative research, grounded in the principles of co-production. The guidelines will now be piloted in the participating sites. To bring an international lens to this work, parallel research is taking place in Australia and funded separately.

Building Evidence for Residential Interventions - Progress and Pitfalls: Youth-Informed Agency-Level Outcome Measurement to Establish Evidence for Residential Interventions

Dr. Dana Weiner (Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago)

For decades, youth, families, advocates, policymakers, researchers and others have called for systematic efforts to review outcomes of residential interventions. As the field embraces landmark changes to regulatory expectations regarding how youth and families are served by residential interventions (i.e., U.S. Family First Prevention Services Act), it is incumbent upon residential providers to reach common ground on the conceptualization and measurement of outcomes. Traditionally, residential programs track outcome measures that focus on satisfaction with services, fiscal outcomes (cost of subsequent placements and hospitalizations), or the resolution of mental health problems within the context of the residential setting. While many agencies providing residential interventions assess the client “experience of care” (e.g., opinions about and satisfaction with residential intervention), there are not universal standards or approaches for assessing subjective experience, objective outcomes, or well-being measures longitudinally.

Objective: This presentation reviews progress toward the development of outcome measurement tools and approaches that balance the need for methodological rigor with the need to incorporate youth and family perspectives. It will discuss methodological, technological, and motivational challenges and underscore the importance of building capacity among residential providers to:

- Develop theories of change, with youth and family input, that articulate the relationships between interventions and outcomes and guide measurement efforts to capture data that can reliably measure proximal and distal outcomes;
- Leverage staff and technological capacity to implement efficient strategies for capturing data necessary to conduct evaluation; and
- Utilize tools and strategies developed for longitudinal/follow-up outcome measurement.

Methods: The author will provide a narrative presentation supplemented by graphic material with particular attention to theory of change development, which considers the root causes of problems being addressed, the population affected by these problems, and the specific activities that are employed to assist children and their families in overcoming them. In addition to problems, populations, and activities, theories of change identify the intended outcomes of intervention, which can include short-term—or proximal—outcomes for youth and/or family members, such as symptom reduction, increase in skills, life satisfaction, behavioral and emotional regulation, and quality of interactions.

Results: Over the past 30 years there has been a steady increase in the collection and use of outcome data by residential providers in the US, as indicated in a survey of providers by the Association of Children’s Residential Centers (Sternberg et al., 2013). However, the field of residential intervention still lacks empirical evidence for the efficacy of this service, due to the challenges of longitudinal analysis of aggregate outcome data across providers. Building upon the foundational work of the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), the Outcomes Workgroup and academic partners developed a youth-informed post-discharge outcomes survey and piloted the tool with a group of residential providers (Weiner et al, 2018). The pilot study yielded key lessons to inform future capacity development and implementation planning.

Conclusions: Attendees will learn the importance of approaches to moving the field toward standards in outcomes measurement that:

- Operationalize activities and interventions for measurement.

- Incorporate appropriate assessment strategies.
- Invest in technological infrastructure that can facilitate monitoring and measurement across agencies.
- Develop designs for longitudinal studies and a strategy for consolidating findings.
- Leverage new measurement strategies to produce reliable and valid evidence for the effectiveness of residential interventions.

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Building Evidence for Residential Interventions - What’s in a Word? Evidence-Based, Evidence-Informed, Promising and ‘Other Types’ of Evidence for Residential Interventions

Prof. Sigrid James (University of Kassel)

Background and Purpose: Delivering interventions that are supported by research evidence has become synonymous with quality care or effective services, not only in the healthcare field but also in social services. In some countries, such as the U.S., the use of evidence-based interventions or practices (EBPs) is increasingly being demanded as a standard by policymakers, funders and service systems and failure to deliver EBPs may result in the loss of funding or even the closure of programs. As such, there is a vested interest for agencies to use interventions that are supported by research evidence and thereby be able to claim to work within an evidence-based framework.

For the field of residential programs and practices, this situation presents a dilemma. The demand to prove the efficacy of residential services with regard to youth and family outcomes is high, yet few program models and interventions relevant for residential have a sufficiently developed empirical base to warrant the label ‘evidence-based.’ As a result, a range of terms have been introduced into the discourse that seem to suggest ‘softer’ methodological standards of evidence than are generally associated with evidence-based practice. Terms such as evidence-informed, practice-based research, community-based evidence, promising or best practice, etc. suggest more flexible and context-specific definitions of evidence that draw on a range of sources, both tacit and formal, and seem less focused on the gold standard of two randomized controlled trials that is generally regarded as the threshold for an intervention to be considered effective.

As part of an open symposium on “Building Evidence for Residential Interventions,” this presentation will address lingering questions about the varying definitions of evidence that are being applied in the context of residential programs.

Method: Through a critical review of the literature, the concepts and terms of evidence-based, evidence-informed, research-based, promising, etc. practice will be retraced and relevant distinctions highlighted. Concrete examples of interventions and program models related to youth-guided care in residential services will be provided to illustrate different types of evidence and how they are portrayed and used in the residential practice arena.

Findings and Conclusion: This critical review will show that various terms with regard to ‘evidence’ are frequently applied incorrectly or inconsistently within the field of residential services. The multitude of terms that are now in circulation when referring to evidence and are often used synonymously or are insufficiently explicated have created an utterly confusing landscape for practitioners, researchers and policymakers when discussing the evidence of interventions. In the context of residential programs questions about whose evidence counts and what levels of evidence suffice demand to be addressed and debated as they have real consequences for the acceptability of interventions as well as for funding.

While this issue might be of more critical importance in the U.S. and other Anglo-American countries, understanding how evidence is conceptualized and created (in the context of residential programs) and the possible implications for practice, policy and research in this area deserve to be discussed more generally and will therefore be addressed in this presentation.

Building Evidence for Residential Interventions- A Youth Informed Practice Level Measurement Framework

Mr. Robert Lieberman (Lieberman Group, Inc.)

A youth-informed practice-level measurement framework has been developed through the efforts of the Outcomes Workgroup (OW) of the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI). The initiative redefines residential as an intervention that links therapeutic residential care in the program with services and supports with the family and in the community. It identifies several practice pillars, most prominent of which are youth-guided, family driven, community-linked, and culturally and linguistically competent care. BBI's genesis was in part a response to concerns shared by youth and family members about the quality and responsiveness, and at times oppressiveness, of the services they were receiving from residential programs.

The OW, co-chaired by a young adult with lived experience in residential programs, developed an instrument containing practice-level indicators of the BBI pillars that can be measured using a Likert scale survey format. The specific indicators were thoroughly vetted, including by a committee of youth; they identify a set of unique practices that individually and collectively involve youth and family perspectives in all aspects of a residential intervention. The design of the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) evaluation process is that youth, family members, staff, and community partners all score the indicators separately, with the deltas used to identify gaps between the groups in their ratings of organizational practice, leading to opportunities for quality improvement.

Many agencies have used the SAT to assess the degree to which they involve youth in their own treatment and implement the practice pillars. Their evaluative data and subjective experiences suggest a correlation between youth guided practices with positive outcomes, as described in *Residential Interventions for Children, Adolescents, and Families: A Best Practice Guide (2014)*and *Residential Transformation; Practical Strategies and Future Directions (in publication, 2020).*Youth consistently value the opportunity to be included in decisions effecting their life, family and community, and providers speak to the changes in culture, practice, and outcomes when youth voice is integrated at all levels of the organization, including in measurement efforts.

The SAT is a framework for practice level measurement that has not yet realized its potential. Aggregate data have not yet been generated for more robust evaluation nor rigorously correlated with functional outcome data. The OW has developed additional instruments to assist organizations and the field and is working toward a longitudinal study of residential impact that can elevate practice-level evaluation to scientific research.

This presentation will provide an overview of the measurement framework, with particular focus on youth involvement in the development of the SAT and in its implementation within organizations.

Ojectives: This presentation will:

1. 1. Identify the domains and indicators of the BBI SAT, with particular focus on youth-guided care.
2. 2. Describe the design of the evaluation process, with focus on the youth and family partnership aspects.
3. 3. Review the impact of the tool as reported by residential programs, particularly as regards youth guided care.
4. 4. Summarize subsequent measurement instruments that have been developed toward developing a framework for establishing evidence.

Method: The author will provide a narrative presentation of the content, supplemented by power point and handouts of sample pages of the SAT.

Results: The BBI measurement framework has been used by organizations to correlate post-discharge outcome measurement with program practices. Youth participation has generated important systemic and organizational cultural change related to youth guided care. The development of subsequent instrumentation has created opportunity for more substantive future measurement activities.

Conclusion: Attendees will learn about:
-The impact of including youth in organizational assessment processes
- A youth-informed framework of detailed practice level indicators that can be used to guide program development as well as assess impact and evidence
-Potential future developments of the measurement framework.

Building Evidence for Residential Interventions-Innovative Residential Interventions Emphasizing Youth Voice with Promising Outcomes and Research Evidence

Dr. Ronald Thompson (RT Consulting, LLC (ronandcol3@gmail.com)), Dr. Alex Trout (University of Nebraska (alex.trout@unl.edu))

Collective Paper Session Chair: Robert Lieberman
Objectives:

1. Provide an example for a pilot study of an innovative residential intervention
2. Describe methods for two rigorous studies of another innovative residential intervention
3. Summarize results of these two studies
4. Suggest conclusions

Outcome studies about residential interventions have suggested that youth make significant pre-post gains, but these improvements are often not maintained after discharge. However, intervention strategies that focus on youth voice, family engagement and aftercare support have shown potential for improving both proximal and distal youth outcomes. For example, a pilot study of a community-based residential program featuring short-term, youth-guided and family driven care including aftercare support suggested that this intervention resulted in reduced recidivism compared to a traditional campus-based program. The results of this pilot study are promising, but it does have limitations including a small sample size and difficulties with matching community-based and campus-based youth with complex presenting problems (Holstead, et al., 2010).

Method

On the Way Home (OTWH) is another innovative intervention that was designed during a partnership between practitioners and university-based applied scientists. They developed, implemented, and evaluated this program to improve the education and placement stability outcomes for youth returning to home and community school settings following placements in residential care. The first step was to interview youth who had previously been discharged from residential care and their families to identify aftercare support needs. The resulting approach includes post-discharge planning at admission to residential care by engaging youth and families in goal setting and discharge planning and scheduling parents for group parent training classes. Youth voice and family engagement continued to be a central part of the residential intervention during care. Then, prior to discharge, both youth and families are still active participants in post-discharge planning, including individualized parenting sessions and youth visits with school officials to support reintegration into community home and school settings. Aftercare support is provided for twelve months after reunification including home and school interventions. OTWH includes two evidence-based programs, *Common Sense Parenting* and *Check and Connect*, a school dropout prevention program. OTWH was tested for efficacy through two U.S Department of Education research grants. In the initial study, these program components were adapted to aftercare support and methods to measure model fidelity were developed and tested.

Results

In the first randomized controlled trial, at 12-months post-reunification the odds of remaining at home and staying in school were 5 and 3 times greater, respectively, for OTWH youth compared to students in the control condition. In the larger efficacy and replication RCT, findings continued to demonstrate significant treatment effects for OTWH at 21-months post-discharge. Finally, significant differences were also found between treatment and control conditions on caregiver self-efficacy and indicators of family and community empowerment (Trout, et al., 2020).

Conclusions

Based on these two rigorous studies, On the Way Home is Supported by Research Evidence according to the California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (www.cebc4cw.org). These studies provide increasing evidence that when youth, caregivers, and schools are all engaged to support school and home environments during residential care and after reunification, long-term student educational and placement stability outcomes improve.

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Burnout in child protection workers. What is known? What is missing?

Ms. Magdalena Garzon Fonseca (University of Groningen), Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen), Prof. John Fluke (University of Colorado), Prof. Hans Grietens (University of Groningen)

Burnout is a persistent problem in child protection services, which leads to adverse consequences for child protection agencies and their workers. According the the Judgments and Decision Processes in Context model (JUDPiC; Benbenishty et al., 2015), and the Decision-Making Ecology Model (DME; Baumann, Dalgleish, Fluke, & Kern, 2011; Graham, Dettlaff, Baumann, & Fluke, 2015) worker-level factors influence judgments and decisions for children and families. Therefore, the importance of studying the issue of burnout in child protection workers. Through a scoping review, 46 studies were examined in order to compile and describe the triggers of burnout that have been researched. Organisational factors appeared most often in the literature. Moreover, individual factors are also identified as triggers of burnout; however, not much research has been done in this area. Individual factors such as attachment, mood, resilience and personal history were identified least often in the research literature. In contrast, organisational factors such as excessive work overload, work-family conflict and role conflict appear to be the most researched factors contributing to the development of burnout in child protection workers.Future research should focus on studying individual factors (attachment, mood, resilience, personal history of abuse) that combine with organisational factors triggering burnout.

But will I be safe with this foster carer?: moving beyond voice to actions to prevent child sexual abuse in care

Dr. Belinda Mayfield (Life Without Barriers)

While feeling safe from harm is a fundamental right of children, it is too often not the lived experience of all children in out of home care. This is a major concern in Australia where, at 30 June 2018, about 45,800 children were in out-of-home care. With 5.8% living in residential care, mainly used for children with complex needs, the vast majority (93%) of children in out of home care were in home based care, mostly with relative or kinship carers (51%), or in foster care (39%). Research contracted by a recent Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that 39% of sexual abuse of children in out of home care related to children involved in foster care settings (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Consultation Paper, 2016). Importantly, these reports include adult perpetrators, as well as child exploitation experiences (e.g. recording and sharing of child sexual abuse material online) and peer-to-peer abuse.

In light of these findings, Government and the community sector are tasked with the responsibility for enhancing child safety in institutional settings. As part of meeting this responsibility Life Without Barriers, which is a national not for profit organization, supporting placements of approximately 2,000 children in care and over 1600 foster and kinship carer households, has established a partnership with key researchers to collaboratively develop abuse prevention approaches.

This presentation will focus on one aspect of this collaborative work which has been a project to develop a comprehensive recruitment and assessment framework, specifically focused on eliciting information from prospective foster carers, relevant to the risk of sexual violence and abuse in out of home care settings. This will include discussion of the importance of not only building knowledge through training but developing practice resources to increase the likelihood of staff being able to apply research knowledge in their day to day practice.

The presentation will provide an overview of the outcome of the key project activities which included a literature review, framework development and co-designed practice tools to enhance the identification of potential risks. The framework which involves a guided interview schedule has been designed as an addition to existing recruitment and assessment processes, including probity checks and not as a stand alone approach.

This project recognises that the foster care setting is a complex environment where the most vulnerable of children are placed with unknown adults (in the case of non-kinship carers) in a ‘closed’ domestic setting that typically has little external surveillance or guardianship. Adding to this complex context, foster carers become the ‘on the ground’ representative of a child focused organisation with much of the responsibility for enacting the day-today care and responsibility of the child on behalf of the state or government authority. The foster care system inherently carries a high degree of organisational risk for unsafe (or criminal) behaviours to occur, as well as providing an opportunity to develop and implement various safety strategies (individual, familial, systemic, environment) to reduce the risk of sexual abuse of children in these settings. It is in acknowledgement of both the risks to children within the foster care environment and the great potential for innovative safety and prevention actions that this project has been undertaken.

The presentation will discuss the challenges in light of the limitations of the current evidence base but also the benefits of researchers and practitioners in this field working in partnership to co-design practice resources, with the aim of testing their utility. The evidence-base generated from this project over time is expected to advance theory, and enhance future policy and practice in this area.

Care improves self-reported daily functioning of adolescents with emotional and behavioural problems

Ms. Vera Verhage (University med), Dr. Danielle Jansen (University Medical), Prof. Hans Grietens (KU Leuven), Dr. Charlotte Wunderink (Hanze University of Applied Sciences), Prof. Menno Reijneveld (University Medi)

Introduction:

Ten to 25% of the adolescents in the general population suffer from emotional or behavioral problems (further: EBP). These problems have a negative impact on various life domains of adolescents' such as; education, physical health, socioeconomic achievements and social functioning. EBP does not necessarily disrupt adolescents' functioning in different domains to the same extent. Their impact can be expected to depend on the type of problem the adolescents have (i.e., emotional, behavioral, or both). Receiving care for EBP may improve the functioning of adolescents with EBP in various life domains but evidence is lacking. We therefore investigated self-reported functioning in different life domains of adolescents with various EBP, and the role of care during a three-year period.

Method:

We used data from the TAKECARE study, which consist of a care and community cohort. We followed adolescents aged 12 and over (n=733) during three years over five assessment rounds. Using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, self-reported functioning was measured in four life domains: home life, friendships, classroom learning and leisure activities. We categorized the respondents into four groups: 1) adolescents without emotional and behavioural problems (n=298); 2) adolescents with internalizing problems (n=192); 3) adolescents with externalizing problems (n=80); and 4) adolescents with both internalizing & externalizing problems (n=163). The development of functioning over time was analyzed using longitudinal ordinal (probit) regression analyses.

Results:

Adolescents with both emotional and behavioral problems experienced a poorer functioning at baseline in all four domains (home life, friendships, learning at school and leisure time) compared with adolescents with no EBP or only emotional or behavioral problems. Adolescents who received care reported poorer functioning at baseline compared to adolescents who did not receive care. Regarding the change in functioning during the three years, adolescents who received care showed improved functioning in all domains.

Conclusion:

We found improved functioning after care, even if the problems may not have been solved. Psychosocial care can contribute to the functioning of adolescents with EBP, which can have major effects on their future life.

Care Leavers in California

Prof. Mark Courtney (University of Chicago)

The transition to adulthood can be particularly challenging for young people in substitute care. Many of these young adults come from families that are marginalized as a result of race, ethnicity and/or poverty, and are unable to turn to their parents or other family members for financial and/or emotional support. Acknowledgement of this led to a fundamental policy shift internationally toward greater government responsibility for supporting foster youths' transitions to adulthood (Courtney, 2009; Stein & Munro, 2008). The 2008 Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act ("Fostering Connections Act") in the USA allowed states, starting in 2011, to claim federal reimbursement for the costs of foster care maintenance payments made on behalf of eligible foster youth until they are 21 years old. States have the option to extend care and 26 states have done so. The California Fostering Connections to Success Act extends foster care to age 21 for eligible youth. California is arguably the most important early adopter of the new policy; it has the largest foster care population in the US and its approach to extending care is particularly ambitious and inclusive, making it an important case study (Courtney, Dworsky, & Napolitano, 2013). Child welfare agencies, courts, other public institutions, and voluntary sector service providers will need to adapt to providing care and supervision to adults, something with which they may have limited or no experience. However, little research has sought to describe the needs and experiences of young adults in foster care.

The California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH) is evaluating the implementation and impact of California's extension of foster care to age 21. The CalYOUTH study design involves interviews with young people making the transition to adulthood from care at 17, 19, and 21 years of age, surveys of caseworkers supervising extended foster care, and analysis of government administrative records on youths' maltreatment and care histories, college enrollment and persistence, earnings, and receipt of need-based public aid. Baseline interviews were conducted in 2013 with a stratified (by county size) statewide random sample of youth between 16.75 and 17.75 years old who had been in care for at least six months (n = 727; 95% response rate). Follow-up interviews were conducted in 2015 with 84% of the baseline sample (n=611) and in 2017 with 85% (n =616) of the baseline sample. This symposium includes presentations based on CalYOUTH data on topics relevant to providing extended foster care to young adults, including: care leavers' participation in decision-making regarding their care; predictors of care leavers' mental health services use and their perceptions of preparedness to manage their need for mental health services; the role of care leaver's social bonds in criminal justice system involvement; and the role of financial support and youth-led campus support programs targeting care leavers in supporting postsecondary educational attainment.

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Care Leavers in California—Examining Predictors of Care Leavers' Participation in their Case-Level Decision-Making

Prof. Mark Courtney (University of Chicago), Dr. Sunggeun Park (University of Michigan), Ms. Jenna Powers (University of Connecticut), Dr. Nathanael Okpych (University of Connecticut)

Background and Purpose: On a given day, there are nearly 62,000 youths in the United States foster care system between the ages of 16 and 21 (Children's Bureau, 2018). Many of these youth will not attain legal permanency, and local child welfare agencies are charged with preparing them to transition from care. Care leavers' participation in their case-planning decisions is recognized as a potential protective factor during their transition to adulthood. Federal legislation aimed at improving care leavers' transition to adulthood has increasingly focused on actively engaging youth in the decisions made about their care and transition, but little empirical research has investigated the extent to which youth participate in their care planning and what factors influence their participation (Nybell, 2013).

Methods: We use multiple data sources from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study, an eight-year longitudinal study of care leavers in California. This study includes a representative sample of 611 care leavers that participated in the baseline and follow-up surveys, conducted in 2013 (response rate=95%) and 2015 (response rate= 81%) when they were approximately 17 and 19 years old, respectively. The 3-category outcome variable captures youths' roles in their ILP development at age 19 (1=was not involved or not aware of their ILP, 2=involved in their ILP development, or 3=led their ILP development). Youth-level predictors were drawn from the baseline survey when participants were age 17 (demographics, personality traits, social support, foster care history, ILP involvement, and several other risk and protective factors). County-level predictors (e.g., unemployment rates, county caseworkers' perceptions of service/training availability) were taken from state administrative data and a representative survey of California caseworkers (conducted in 2013, n=235, response rate=90%). Multivariate ordinal logistic regression was used to explore relationships between youth- and county-level predictors and the outcome.

Results: At age 19, 36% of youth reported leading their ILP development, 40% being involved but not leading development, and 24% were not involved in or aware of their ILP. Regression analyses found that having more informational social support increased the odds of a youth leading their ILP by 40%. The odds of taking a leading role in ILP involvement at age 19 was 2.2 times greater for youth who led their ILP at age 17. Conversely, repeating a grade in school reduced the odds of leading the ILP by 27%. The odds of leading ILP development was 6.6 times greater for youth who remained in care past age 18 (i.e., participated in extended foster care). Lastly, youth residing in counties where caseworkers viewed court personnel (i.e., judges, attorneys) as being supportive of extending foster care had 75% greater odds of leading their ILP development.

Conclusions and Implications:

Research on youth engagement in care decision-making is just beginning and further research is needed. This study suggests that practices, procedures, and policies may encourage or hinder care leavers' meaningful engagement in case planning that can influence adulthood transition. Given that youth involvement in ILP development is legally mandated, it was particularly alarming to find that nearly a quarter of the youth reported being either unaware of or uninvolved in their ILP at age 19. This calls for greater attention to the interpersonal- and systems-level factors within child welfare contexts that may impact youths' involvement in decision-making about their future.

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Care Leavers in California—Policies and Programs that Support Persistence in Postsecondary Education

Dr. Nathanael Okpych (University of Connecticut), Dr. Sunggeun Park (University of Michigan), Prof. Mark Courtney (University of Chicago)

Background and Objectives:

In the last 20 years, improving postsecondary education outcomes for care leavers has been a goal targeted by several U.S. policy and program initiatives. The overwhelming majority of care leavers aspire to go to college (Courtney et al., 2004), and completing a degree has been linked to later economic stability and well-being (Okpych & Courtney, 2015; Salazar, 2015). Still, care leavers enroll and persist in college at markedly lower rates than their peers (Geiger et al., 2017). Two promising initiatives that are intended to increase persistence rates are Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs) and campus-support programs (CSPs) for care leavers. ETVs offer qualifying care leavers up to $5,000 annually toward college costs. CSPs are programmes located on college campuses that are tailored to meet the needs of care leavers, and provide an array of financial, academic, and logistical supports. Currently, over 200 colleges nationwide administer a CSP. Although ETVs and CPS have been in existence for about two decades, little evaluation has taken place to estimate their impact on college persistence. The objective of this study is to examine predictors of ETV receipt and CSP participation, and to assess the effect of ETV receipt and CSP participation on persistence.

Methods:

The sample includes 401 youths in the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH) who had enrolled in postsecondary education by the time of their Wave 3 interview (age 21). In 2019, college records from the National Student Clearinghouse were obtained to evaluate college persistence (1= completed their first two semesters, 0 = did not complete their first two semesters). Binary measures of youths' ETV receipt and CSP participation were created from information obtained during the Wave 2 and 3 CalYOUTH Study interviews (ages 19 and 21, respectively). Logistic regression was used to estimate the associations between ETV receipt/CSP participation and persistence, controlling for demographic characteristics, foster care history characteristics, behavioral health problems, child-welfare case planning, county-level factors, and college-level factors.

Results:

Approximately 45% of care leavers in college persisted through their first two semesters, 52% participated in a CSP, and 41% received an ETV. Preliminary analyses suggested that youth were more likely to receive ETVs if they were faring well academically (e.g., higher reading proficiency, better grades, were not in special education, had not repeated a grade), were involved in and satisfied with child welfare planning meetings about their future, and attended postsecondary institutions that were more selective. Youth were more likely to participate in a CSP if they remained in care past the age of 18 and enrolled in a four-year public college. Results from the regression analysis found that the odds of persistence for youth who received an ETV was nearly three times the odds of youth who had not received an ETV (p=.001). The odds of persistence for youth who participated in CSPs were 2.2 times the odds of youth who had not participate (p=.023).

Conclusions:

Findings suggest that both ETV receipt and CSP participation were positively associated with the odds of persistence. The findings are encouraging because these levers are designed to address barriers that care leavers face when completing college. Although ETVs are, in principle, available to care leavers who enroll in higher education, less than half reported receiving one. And while a growing number of colleges offer CSPs, many care leavers had not participated. Child welfare professionals appear to play a part in linking youths to ETVs and CSPs through extended care participation case planning. While the findings on the roles of ETVs and CSPs are promising, this is an early study and more research is needed.

Care Leavers in California—Predictors of Mental Health Service Use and Preparedness to Manage One's Mental Health

Dr. Michelle Munson (New York University), Dr. Colleen Katz (Hunter College), Dr. Nathanael Okpych (University of Connecticut), Prof. Mark Courtney (University of Chicago)

Objectives: Important changes occur during the transition to adulthood, not the least of which is a shift toward youth more independently managing their own mental health (Holmbeck, 2002). Managing mental health can be complicated, and it often includes the need to take psychotropic medication(s) and/or consistently attend counseling. The purpose of the present study is to examine the rates of psychotropic medication use and outpatient counseling use of 17-year olds involved with the child welfare system in California, and to examine factors that predict medication use, counseling use, and the youths' perceived level of preparedness to manage their mental health.

Method: Data were drawn from Wave 1 of the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH) (n=727, response rate=95%). The three outcomes include past year counseling use, past year medication use, and youths' perceptions of their level of preparedness to manage their mental health. Preparation to manage mental health was measured by asking, "How prepared do you feel to manage your mental health?" Options ranged from 1 (not prepared) to 4 (very prepared). Ordinal logistic regression was used to assess predictors of preparation to manage mental health, and binary logistic regression was used to assess predictors of counseling use and medication use. Predictors included age, sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, maltreatment (presence of physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse), prior mental health disorder, county size, and caseworkers' perceptions about the mental health services in their county. Presence of a mental health (MH) disorder was assessed using the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview, and was indicated by a positive screen for a mood, anxiety, or behavior disorders. Sample weights were applied to adjust for features of the study design.

Results: Thirty-nine percent met criteria for a MH disorder, and past-year service use rates were 54% for counseling and 29% for psychotropic medications. About one-fifth of the sample reported feeling less than prepared to manage their mental health. Rates of medication use (41% vs. 21%) and counseling use (70% vs. 45%) were significantly higher for youth with a MH disorder than for youth without (both p<.01). Regression results found several statistically significant predictors (p<.05). MH disorder was a significant predictor of all three outcomes, increasing the expected odds of medication use (OR=2.36) and counseling use (OR=2.32) and decreasing youths' perceptions of preparedness to manage their MH (OR=0.52). A history of sexual abuse was associated with a higher likelihood of medication use (OR=1.97) and counseling use (OR=2.04). Youth who identified as 100% heterosexual were less likely than non-100% heterosexual peers to use counseling (OR=0.58) but felt more prepared to manage their MH (OR=1.48). Results also suggest geographic variation in use. Finally, caseworkers' perception of greater helpfulness of services in the county they worked predicted greater mental health preparedness among the youth (OR=1.23, p<.05).

Conclusions: Results suggest that adolescents in California's foster care system are heavy users of MH services. As expected, youth with a MH disorder had higher rates of use. Lower scores on perceived preparedness to manage MH for those with MH disorders suggests that the child welfare system may improve overall transition programming by including a curriculum on MH management, particularly for those with an identified MH disorder.

Care Leavers in California—Relationship between Social Bonds and Later Adult Criminal Justice System Involvement

Prof. Keunhye Park (Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI), Prof. Mark Courtney (University of Chicago)

Background and Objectives: International studies following care leavers into early adulthood show that they experience poorer outcomes across various life domains compared to the general population. In particular, research in the U.S. shows that young people in foster care are at increased risk of entering the justice system when they leave care (Cusick & Courtney, 2007; Vaughn, Shook, & McMillen, 2008), with rates of one-third to one-half of youth experiencing arrest or incarceration during their transition to adulthood. Involvement in the justice system during early adulthood creates adverse consequences with regard to future life opportunities, exposing care leavers to enormous stress and barriers as they attempt to become successful adults. However, limited research has investigated important protective factors, such as social bonds or supportive relationships, that could prevent them from criminal justice system involvement (CJI) in the transition to adulthood. Informed by social control theory (Hirshi, 1969), this study seeks to address gaps in the understanding of potential protective factors by investigating the contributions distinct forms of social bonds have on care leavers' future justice system involvement. This study seeks to address two questions: Are there distinct subgroups based on social bonds at age 17? If so, do risks of CJI vary over time by these subgroups?

Methods: The analytic sample includes 540 respondents who completed all three interview waves of the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH). Predictors were measured at Wave 1 (age 17), and the outcome was measured at Waves 2 and 3 (age 19 and 21). Nine indicators were used to capture two domains of social bonds: interpersonal bonds (birth family and new family) and institutional bonds (school, employment, religiosity, and professional support). Latent class analysis (LCA) was used to derive subclasses of youth based on social bonds at age 17. Then, binary logistic regression was used to examine associations between the latent classes and CJI, controlling for other covariates. The outcome variable, CJI, is a binary self-report measure capturing arrest, incarceration, or conviction of crime since last interview. Control variables include respondents' demographic characteristics, maltreatment history, pre-care family problems, behavioral health problems, foster care characteristics, and justice involvement prior to age 18. All analyses used weights to account for the survey design.

Results: CJI declined across ages (40% at age 17, 17% at age 19, 15% at age 21; $p<.001$). In estimating LCA models, a two-class model was selected based on statistical model fit criteria (BLRT $p<.001$, BIC=5520). Results show that youths in Class 1 are distinguished by high birth family bonds (particularly bonds with mother and grandparents, $p<.001$), whereas youths in Class 2 possess high institutional bonds (particularly bonds to education and to professionals, $p<.001$). Bivariate results show that the number institutional bonds predicted decreased odds of later CJI at age 19 ($p<0.05$) and age 21 ($p<0.01$). Regression results did not find significant associations between latent classes and CJI.

Conclusions: Consistent with research on youth in the general population, a downward trend in CJI was observed for care leavers as they entered adulthood. Results suggest that latent class groups do not predict CJI, but the number of institutional bonds are associated with later CJI involvement. Findings provide tentative evidence that social bonds at the onset of adulthood may be associated with later CJI for care leavers. Institutional bonds may be particularly important to emphasize and promote before care leavers enter adulthood. This calls for professional support and active engagement with youth to foster connections with education, job training programs, and professionals. More work is needed to identify other risk and protective factors associated with justice system involvement for care leavers.

Care Leavers Lived Experience and Long Term Outcomes of Maltreatment as Children in Care in the Twentieth Century: The Stolen Generations

Prof. Elizabeth Fernandez (School of Social Sciences, The University of New South Wales), Dr. Jung-Sook Lee (School of Social Sciences, The University of New South Wales)

This presentation reports research into life experiences of 'care' leavers who have lived in institutions or other forms of out-of-home care (OOHC) as children. Research participants were drawn from the larger cohort of those who were in care between 1930 and 1989: the Stolen Generations (Aboriginal children), Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants. This presentation will focus on members of the Stolen Generations.

Background and significance

It is estimated that during the period 1910-1970, between one in three and one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (equates to 25,000 children) were forcibly separated from their families, communities, and culture (HREOC, 1997). Indigenous children were placed in non-Indigenous government, non-government and religious institutions, and adopted and fostered by non-Indigenous families. Trauma associated with maltreatment and severance of parental and family relationships included alienation from culture and attempted erasure of Indigeneity/Aboriginality. Legacies of racist and oppressive policies that created the Stolen Generations continue to be felt by Aboriginal communities across Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be overrepresented in the care nationally. At 30 June 2018, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC was 59.4 per 1,000 children, which is 11 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (5.2 per 1000) (AIHW, 2019)

Objectives

- Explore patterns of older care leavers' experiences and life trajectories in care and post care
- Identify their current unmet needs and ways to support them
- Apply learnings to contemporary OOHC and after care to enhance favourable life outcomes and transition services for those in care currently.

Method

This study utilised a cross-sectional design with mixed-methods. To obtain both wide-ranging and in-depth information, this study conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups eliciting the voices of careleavers. Specifically, this study adopted a convergent parallel design where quantitative and qualitative components were run concurrently . The questionnaire/interview guide explored experiences in care, experiences of leaving care, life outcomes after care and current service needs. This presentation will focus specifically on careleavers personal accounts of experiences of maltreatment and effects of maltreatment on their adult outcomes.

Results

Emotional, physical and sexual abuse frequently occurred concurrently. Almost all (96.7%) experienced some type of maltreatment while in care; 41% experienced all forms of maltreatment in care. Children experienced a high level of abuse from predatory adults, and by peers. The quality of schooling was generally poor and many children left care illiterate and innumerate. Children were involved in hard physical labour from a very young age. Participants were more likely to be maltreated while in care if they were younger at entry into OOHC, were State wards at entry, stayed longer in OOHC, had more placements, did not have or rarely had contact with their families, and did not have anyone helpful to support them in care. The consequences of maltreatment in care extended well beyond their childhoods persisting into late adulthood. Experiencing all types of abuse while in care had more negative effects on various adult outcomes.

Conclusion and implications.
Participants were denied almost all rights to protection, nurture, learning, health and wellbeing while growing up in care. Instead, they experienced neglect, abuse and great trauma with lifelong health and wellbeing impacts. Implications for policy and services are identified including:

- that the Stolen Generations are recognised as a special needs group, to facilitate free or low-cost access to health, education and the aged care services in recognition of the significant trauma they experienced.

- That truly integrated services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples be developed, that are culturally embedded and delivered through Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations

Care leavers‘ perspectives on the family in the transition from out-of-home-care to adulthood

Prof. Stephan Sting (Department of Educational Science, University of Klagenfurt)

Findings from youth research have shown that, due to the development of the transitional phase of “emerging adulthood”, the family has become increasingly significant for young adults as a form of support and as a safety net. Care leavers, by contrast, are confronted with a relatively abrupt transition to independent living. International studies have shown, however, that the family also plays a significant role during the status passage of leaving care – as an arena of concrete social relationships, as a normative model and ideal, as a biographical experience and memory, as a connection to family traditions and practices and as an important contextual factor for resilience, identity formation, self-education and the establishment of social affiliations.

In the first part of the presentation the different links of care leavers to their families will be explored, based on a review of international scientific literature. In the second part the relevance of family links will be pointed out by the example of their influence on educational careers. It will be explained in which way family relationships, images of the family and family practices play an action-guiding role for young people’s educational actions during out-of-home care and during the transition to independent living. This part is based on a qualitative study about educational pathways of care leavers in Austria. In the study biographical oriented interviews with care leavers were conducted and completed by the construction of egocentric network maps. The data analysis followed the procedures of the documentary method. The results derived from this study for the perspecitves on the family have an explorative character. They deliver a basis for further research about the relevance of family links in the transition from care to independent living.

CARE LEAVERS' VOICES AND SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES ABOUT TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD FROM CARE

Ms. Federica Gullo (University of Oviedo), Ms. Laura García-Alba (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo)

Introduction

International research on care-leaving shows how complex and challenging is emerging adulthood for care experienced young adults. They have to cope with a more accelerated, compressed, and short transition to adulthood, with fewer resources than peers who have not been in care. This makes them a vulnerable group, as they experience more difficulties in managing independent life tasks, and they show poor outcomes in relation to housing, health, education, training, employment and other core developmental needs.

Objectives

In close relationship with the main aim of this EUSARF 2021 conference, this study tries to give voice to young people leaving care to share their unique perspective, which are often ignored. Hence, the aim of this research is to understand the emerging adulthood'scomplexity by focusing on care leavers' subjective experiences and needs.

Method

In order to do this, we collected their perceptions about how they are living this delicate transition according to their particular circumstances and vicissitudes, the kind of benefits and supports they are receiving, and their satisfaction with the previous preparation and the current support and services.

Participants are 222 care leavers aged 18 to 25, receiving support from different agencies in several Autonomous Communities in Spain, which offer support in multiples areas to young people with limited resources, with the aim of facilitating their transition to independent living in terms of social and labour insertion.

Methods of data collection included a semi-structured interview, designed to gather information about different aspects of their current and past situation. The explored areas were school qualification and training, work situation, income, housing, health and well-being, community integration, social relationships and social support, family and childcare background and feelings and expectations about their transition to adult life. We also used a questionnaire to assess the satisfaction of care leavers interviewed with the support services received.

Results

Results will describe the profiles and opinions of care leavers about their current and past situation, their experience navigating care and after care services, their process of transition to adulthood from care, their previous preparation, their level of satisfaction with the support they have received from the aftercare agencies and their feelings about future. Moreover, the influence of relevant profile variables in their experiences, such as gender, age or origin will also be studied. Data analysis is being carried out at the moment of this submission, using the statistics program SPSS v26.0.

Conclusions

Listening to the voices and opinions of young care leavers about their process of transition to adulthood will allow us to have a deeper understanding of this process and what is really helping them. This knowledge can facilitate the detection of care leavers' needs and the outcomes evaluation of the current benefits and supports received, in order to have a positive impact on their future, improving their living conditions and well-being.

Care of unaccompanied children in Northern France – The use of film to critically reflect on lived experience and the research process

Ms. Amy Stapleton (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin), Dr. Paula Mayock (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin)

This presentation draws on data from a Participatory Action Research (PAR) PhD study with 12 African young people, aged 18-24, who arrived in France as children unaccompanied by a parent(s) or guardian(s). As aged-out separated children, these young people's transition to adulthood is characterised by a loss of protections and limited access to a range of services including accommodation, welfare and psychosocial support (Bravo and Santos-González, 2017, Chase and Statham, 2013, Ní Raghallaigh, 2007). While the need to develop policy and practice to tackle the range of challenges faced by the aged-out separated children, there is a dearth of research on this highly marginalised youth population and their perspectives on their situations are rarely heard.

A key aim of this Participatory Action Research project was to support separated young people to share their experiences and participate in the research process a meaningful way. PAR was chosen because it recognises and values participants as individuals who can demonstrate agency within constrained political, economic, and social contexts (Brydon‐Miller and Maguire, 2009, Cammarota and Fine, 2010, MacDonald, 2012). By privileging the perspectives and involvement of the young people, PAR has the capacity to provide detailed insights into the lived experiences of separated young people whilst simultaneously supporting them to play an active role in the research process (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). The study's PAR process included one 9-month participatory group project and the conduct of 12 in-depth interviews with separated young people.

Despite the focus participant-centred research, the PAR process was complex (Brydon-Miller and Kral, 2019). Several methodological, ethical and practical challenges emerged during the research process, many of which centred on imbalances of power and group conflict. Challenges also emerged when working with research participants who, albeit enthusiastic about the project, were living in with fast-changing circumstances and challenges, including housing instability, uncertainty related to residence permits, the task of juggling school and work and financial difficulties.

Reflexivity and critical reflection were critical to the incremental development of responses to the challenges associated with the implementation of PAR. Reflexivity enabled me to gain an awareness of the influence of my assumptions and beliefs on the different stages of the research process (Etherington, 2004) while critical reflectivity assisted me to change my practice during the research process (Shaw and Gould, 2001). Although reflexivity and critical reflection were central to my own practice, they were also invaluable to the participatory group. The processes supported the group to overcome obstacles faced together. Creative methods such as storytelling, filmmaking and art, as well as time spent informally time 'hanging out' together, facilitated the group to collectively reflect on the process as well as their lived experiences of the transition to adulthood.

This paper discusses the creation of a short film, a creative method used by the group to critically reflect on, and create awareness of, their experiences of life in France. The process of filmmaking also provided a space for participants to develop an awareness of and challenge their own assumptions while reflecting on the research process. The experiences illustrated in the film demonstrate many of the key issues they faced since arriving in France, namely, homelessness and the challenges related to negotiating the child protection and immigration systems. The film also demonstrates the importance of informal support networks in the young people's lives. By presenting excerpts from the short film, the paper reflects on several challenges the participants surmounted since arrival in France, as well as the use of critical reflection and reflexivity to overcome the various challenges faced during the research process.

Care of unaccompanied migrant children and young people - Placement breakdown of unaccompanied children in Flemish family foster care. Prevalence and associated factors

Dr. Frank Van Holen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Ms. Cindy Blijkers (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Mrs. Lenny Trogh (Kenniscentrum Pleegzorg), Ms. Delphine West (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Prof. Johan Vanderfaeillie (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Objectives

Data regarding breakdown in family foster care for unaccompanied children (UC) are scarce and non-existing for Flanders (Dutch speaking part of Belgium). This study aimed at investigating the incidence of placement breakdown in Flemish family foster care for UC, and to explore the association of breakdown with foster child, foster family and case characteristics.

Method

A representative sample of 107 randomly selected case files of UC who were placed in family foster care were analyzed, using a research window of one year. Data were collected regarding the ending of placement (positive, breakdown or no end, i.e. the UC still lived in the foster family) and a wide range of characteristics of the UC, the biological family, the foster family, and the foster care placement.

First, descriptive analysis was done. Next, association of independent variables with the dichotomized dependent variable (breakdown or not) were examined using logistic regression analysis.

Results

After one year 19 placements (17.8%) had terminated: 13 placements broke down (12.2%) and 6 placements ended positively (5.6%). Conflicts between the foster parents and the UC (n = 5, 38.5%), parenting problems (n = 3, 23.1%), conflicts between the foster parents and the biological family of the UC (n = 3, 23.1%), and running away of the UC (n = 2, 15.4%) were the causes of placement disruption.

Logistic regression resulted in a significant model (χ^2=20.334; df = 6; p = .002), explaining 37% of the variance (Nagelkerke R^2 = .368) with one significant and two marginally significant variables: having experienced trauma in Belgium (exp(B) = .052, p = .047), social contact with peers of the Belgian culture (exp(B) = 5.774, p = .057), and social contact with peers of the same culture (exp(B) = 4.066, p = .086). The likelihood of experiencing a placement breakdown was 19 times higher for UC who experienced trauma in Belgium (separation from their parents as a result of abandonment, repatriation or decease in the host country). In addition, UC who didn’t have social contacts with peers from the same culture and UC who didn’t have social contacts with peers of the Belgian culture were respectively four and five times more at risk of experiencing placement breakdown.

Discussion and conclusion

Only characteristics related to the stay in Belgium were associated with placement breakdown. Special attention should be payed to post migration traumatic events. More specifically, UC who experience separation from their parents in the host country are at high risk of placement breakdown. Furthermore, considering the protective influence of social contacts with peers, facilitating contacts with peers from the same culture and from the autochthonous community is of major importance. Therefore, activities promoting social contact such as leisure activities are recommended. Sufficient resources should be provided to enable youngsters to join hobby clubs or sport clubs. In addition, foster care services should invest in the organization of fellow contacts for UC.

Care of unaccompanied migrant children and young people – Perspectives on the roles of accommodation and education in creating care in high-income countries and England

Dr. Ellie Ott (Centre for Evidence and Implementation), Dr. Aoife O'Higgins (Magdalen College Oxford), Ms. Caitlin Prentice (Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

This presentation presents three findings from the studies related to unaccompanied migrant children in two aspects of their lives that are both theoried as important and expressed by young people as important for ideas of care: accommodation and education. First, findings are presented from a high-quality, pre-registered systematic reviews on the impact of accommodation type for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children on their health and educational outcomes in high-income countries (O'Higgins, Ott, & Shea, 2018). An exploratory meta-analysis shows unaccompanied refugee children placed in family foster care have better mental health than those placed in other forms of accommodation, but education and health outcomes as well as mechanisms for these outcomes need further research.

The presentation then delves into the gap in the literature on the role of education in two studies in England. In the most recent figures, the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children represents 6% of the children in care in England, and the number has more than doubled compared to 2013 (to 5,070), although it pales in comparison to some European countries (Department for Education, 2019).

The first study on education is a mapping study conceptualising educational provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in England and its role in their lives (Ott & O'Higgins, 2019). This scoping study included semi-structured interviews (n=14) with social workers, virtual school heads in charge of the education for children in care, teachers, and charity providers, document analysis, and analysis of administrative data where available. Analyses indicate that some unaccompanied migrant children in England receive education provision that does not meet their needs or statutory obligations while others receive tailored and thoughtful provision. Findings also indicate consensus among practitioners not only that unaccompanied migrant children have particular educational needs tied with language acquisition, past trauma, and acculturation, but also that education provision is an important to young people for their futures, wellbeing, and friendships. The findings highlight gaps in data and provision, frame education provision through an integration lens and as part of broader ideas of care, and set the agenda for future research and practice.

Lastly, the presentation ends with selections of narratives from unaccompanied migrant young people themselves in England. Interviews with five young people were collected as part of a participatory, knowledge exchange project in the summer 2019, which also included a photo exhibit. Preliminary analyses indicate high educational aspirations and perspectives of education as a means not only for employment, but also for the creation of senses of self and inclusion into society. Bringing together the strands of these projects, notions of 'care' for unaccompanied migrant children expand beyond formal systems of children's social care to everyday spaces of accommodation and education, where relationships and sense of self develop.

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Care-experienced, co-trainers: Multi-vocal trainings on the transition to adulthood. The experience of “Leaving Care” projects.

Dr. Marzia Saglietti (Department of Education, Almamater University of Bologna), Ms. Margherita Brasca (SOS Children Village), Ms. Lisa Cerantola (Department of Education, Almamater University of Bologna), Ms. Francesca Letizia (SOS Children Village), Ms. Adina Jujic (Agevolando Italy), Ms. Raffaella Montuori (Agevolando Italy), Ms. Samantha Tedesco (SOS Children Village)

Trainings for professionals working with children in out-of-home care are traditionally designed and delivered by well-known experts in the field that not only are supposed to disseminate the results of recent research and effective practices from the field, but also are asked to share children’ and young people’s perspectives on the care they received. It is far less usual, however, to recognize the expertise of those who “inhabited” the (residential and foster) care – the “so called” care-experienced young people and children – and therefore to involve them in research and training experiences. Interestingly enough, while in the recent years different examples of involvement of young care-experienced in research has been carried out, less is known about the involvement in training the professionals working in the field.

Starting from that claim, this paper aims at describing and analyzing the resources, challenges, methodological issues and practical implications of co-constructing trainings with a group of care-experienced young people in Italy. Drawing on the EU Projects “In.fo – Insieme formando (Training together)” (2015/2016), “Prepare for leaving care” (2017/2018) and “Leaving Care” (2018/2020) led by SOS Children International with the Council of Europe and CELCIS, in this contribution we illustrate the whole process of planning, delivering and doing a follow up of twelve trainings that involved more than 200 professionals working in residential and foster care (e.g. social workers, psychologists, social educators, guardians, and so forth) in Italy. Trainings were fully based on the co-construction of training with a group of around 15 young people (Gruppo Giovani, SOS Children Villages Italy) coming from care experiences either of residential care or foster care all over Italy.

Trainings were aimed at: a) disseminating a right-based approach to the transition to adulthood; b) co-constructing significant ways for the young people to contribute to the planning and realization of their leaving care processes; c) reflecting on the multiple ways to have better results in the leaving care process in residential and foster care, raising awareness on the phenomenon, on the transition process (and its challenges) and building up new practices and experiment new solutions; d) involving professionals and their institutions in constructing sustainable practices of child-centered trainings/events in their local contexts, in order to ameliorate the quality of the care system through a global activity of national advocacy.

The whole approach, activities and articulation of the trainings were planned and negotiated with the Gruppo Giovani, who overviewed the project and constituted one of the many actors of the process. Additionally, two care-experienced young people were involved as co-trainers in the fourth day of the trainings. Their role was not only to deliver and reflect on their personal experiences, but also to represent and amplify the voices of children and young people of the Gruppo Giovani and other young people they met during several experiences of collective participation events.

This child-centered training approach showed many practical implications and required a wise and attentive methodological approach to the co-training and in general to the involvement of young people in care. These results will be discussed from many perspectives: from the point of view of (Master) trainers and co-trainers (i.e. care-experienced young people), from the staff of leading organization of the project, from the participants of the national trainings. Conclusion of the paper regards the methodological attentions and practical issues involved in delivering co-trainings and follow up.

CareME – An attachment based intervention for caregivers working in residential care settings

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Attachment theory origins can be traced back to the work that Bowlby has conducted in his early career as a volunteer in residential institutions for disturbed children (Eagle, 2013). Since then, attachment theory has made distinctive contributions for child and youth protection policies by addressing the “ill-effects of deprivation” of parental care (e.g., Bowlby & WHO, 1952, contributions for UN programme for the welfare of homeless children).

In this report, Bowlby already advocated for the professionalization of careers as a key strategy for understanding and dealing with mental health symptoms such as depression, aggression and regression (Bowlby & WHO, 1952). Nowadays, although it is consensual the need to provide professional care to children and youth under legal protection and promotion measures, namely in out-of-home care, training care practitioners in mental health and human relations is still very residual. In fact, the absence of training and supervision, in line with poor conditions of employment, is an important predictor of high staff turnover in this domain (Colton & Roberts 2004; 2007).

Portugal has one of the highest rates of children and young people living in residential care settings in Europe (Delgado & Gersão, 2018), contrasting with the lower rates of foster care placements. Although important changes in legal frameworks concerning both residential and foster care systems have been conducted recently, the vast majority of out of home care is conducted in residential care settings, with institutionalizations that range from less than 1 year and 6 or more years (M = 3.4 years) (ISS, 2020).

The main aim of this paper is to present an attachment-based intervention programme developed for caregivers working in residential care settings. This intervention is part of a major action research project, CareME, that includes a multi-informant (directors, caregivers and adolescents) 4 wave longitudinal study. The project also aims to evaluate the effects of the intervention with the caregivers on the psychosocial development of adolescents that live in residential care. This project results from the collaboration of two universities from the North of Portugal, the National Public Social Security Sector - Porto district and includes the participation of caregivers and adolescents living in 21 from a total of 24 residential care facilities operating in the Porto district.

We will identify and discuss the major contributions of the intervention programme for improving caregivers’ sensitivity and emotion regulation when working with youth in residential care. We will focus on the caregivers’ attachment representations and the use of reflective functioning to improve mentalization processes in the relationship with youth. The presentation will also discuss the participants’ feedback of the intervention (preferred themes, approaches and practices), and representations of the intervention’s applicability/usefulness.

Challenges in implementing an interactive six-year follow up study of 2000 investigated children in Sweden – initial strategies when integrating children's and professionals' experiences and perspectives in the study design

Prof. Stefan Wiklund (Department of Social Work, Stockholm University), Prof. Tommy Lundström (Department of Social Work, Stockholm University), Prof. Marie Sallnäs (Stockholm university, department of social work), Dr. David Pålsson (Department of Social Work, Stockholm University), Dr. Maria Andersson Vogel (Department of Social Work, Stockholm University)

Objectives

The presentation draws on a newly established large-scale six-year prospective longitudinal research program, which brings children's as well as professionals' perspectives of the child welfare system and the research process to the fore. Data collection in the longitudinal study will be launched in September 2021 This presentation focus on the early implementation process of establishing a reference group of professionals and end users (i.e. children) as well as describing the setting, the process and preliminary result of the interactive components in the study design.

The program has an overall twofold objective: First, 2,000 children and youth in 8 municipalities will be subject to a prospective, longitudinal study of their trajectory through the child welfare system and beyond. From this cohort, a subsample of 100 children are followed in-depth by interviews and observations in different post investigative settings. Second, instruments used in the longitudinal study as well as interpretation of results emanating from the longitudinal study will be subject to an interactive validation process by professionals and children (through end user organisations).

Method

Baseline is set at point of investigation with follow-ups one (T1) and five (T2) years after termination of investigation. Surveys using assigned child welfare worker/child welfare manager as an informant will be employed at T1 and T2. Measurement at T2 will also employ data from social-, health- and criminal registers. Data enables analyses of the extent children are referred to different services (in-home and out-of-home care) and the extent children are re-referred to additional investigations and services during the time span. Data also enables analyses of determinants of different outcomes in child welfare. In addition, a sub-sample of 100 children are monitored closely by observations and interviews (targeting children, parents, child welfare workers, foster careers and staff in different post-investigative settings).

The integration of children and professionals in the research process consists of the following steps: instruments used in the longitudinal study will be adapted to real world usage by child welfare workers and managers to be used in local follow-ups and service evaluation. The adaptation process will include child welfare professionals and end users in several interactive formats (reference group, focus group interviews and collaboration with a regional R&D-unit). These interactive formats will also serve as opportunities to discuss interpretation of findings and disseminate results to professionals and end users. The research team has an interdisciplinary academic competence in social work, sociology, law and criminology.

Results

In this current initial phase, the importance of legitimising a study design of this magnitude in the local context has become evident. The legitimising process has entailed enrolling key local actors (local politicians, child welfare managers, managers of the R&D-unit) as well a national actors (end user organisations). Results emanating from the forthcoming (spring 2020) recurrent interactive formats (seminars with representatives from the research group, local child welfare workers and end-users organisations) will be presented. Themes addressed during these seminars are e.g. instrument construction, ethical aspects of long-term follow-ups in child welfare and interpretation of pilot results.

Conclusion

Conclusion drawn at present stage is the importance legitimising the study in respect to different actors in the local and national context. Preliminary conclusions – particularly regarding the child perspective in relation to the study – of the interactive formats will be drawn in June 2020 after the initial seminars with professionals and end users have taken place.

Challenges of therapeutic work with transgender youth

Mrs. Sanja Narić (Neuropsychiatric hospital „Dr. Ivan Barbot“)

Though it appears that awareness and tolerance around gender issues are increasing, attempted suicide rate among transgender population is still greater than 40%. Even compared to their other LGBT peers, transgender youth are at increased risk of experiencing depressed mood, seriously considering suicide, and attempting suicide. More openness in revealing personal gender issues often results in more stigmatization and misunderstanding. In many cases gender dysphoria can be recognized at very young age, which means that they struggle most of their childhood life. Eventually, “coming out” can result with negative emotional consequences of family rejection, peer and community victimization, social isolation, as well as discrimination and transphobia in both daily settings (e.g., school) and society in general.

Most clinicians are not trained to identify clinical themes prevalent for transgender individuals, and consequently misunderstand their mental health and their global treatment needs. Traditional training fails to address gender and sexuality development of transgender persons from a nonpathological perspective. If we fail to educate and train ourselves adequately around these issues, we can actively cause harm to our clients.

This case study shows psychotherapy process with a teenage girl who comes to therapy due to depressive and anxiety symptoms. During the course of therapy she reveals her transgender issues. Her initial symptoms correspond to symptomatology found in research with transgender population – suicidality, self-harm, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem. On the other hand, she has many borderline personality traits, which may contraindicate current initiation of gender transition. It also shows the patient’s perspective of her emotional and mental state during the course of therapy through her artwork, as well as her interpretation of other people’s perception of herself giving us insight to the inner world of young people with transgender issues.

The case study brings many questions to be considered – differential diagnosis, professional discussion, and further scientific research. Only thorough comprehension of broad range transgender problems, as well as risk and protective factors, based on research and scientific findings can lead us to effective and high quality practice guidelines, treatment approach and preventive interventions for transgender youth.

Challenging foster childrens right to success in school, new insights from Swedish intervention research

Mr. Rikard Tordön (Linköping University)

To perform good in school can be challenging for many children in foster care. And, non-failure in school can also be a protective factor for later adversities in poor health, unemployment, drug addiction and subsidy dependence. There are several interventions aiming to enhance school performance for children in out-of-home care. Some are home-based and others are based on interventions in school. Skolfam is a school-based preventive work model that build on standardized assessments of several prerequisites for school performance, followed by a plan to fill knowledge gaps and make use of strengths. Child participation play a central role in the method. After the first two years, assessments are repeated to evaluate what needs that persist and what objectives has been achieved.

From a scientific perspective, assessment data from Skolfam is a source to comprise for analyses of prerequisites and how these change by intervention. This has been done in two studies, where the first focus on baseline data from 856 foster care children (Rikard Tordön, Bladh, Svedin, & Sydsjö, 2020), and the second focus on 475 children assessed before and after interventions (Submitted manuscript).

The purpose of the first study was to outline prerequisites for interventions aimed at school performance for children in foster care, related to age-standardized norms. Assessments of intelligence, literacy and numeracy skills, mental and behavioural conditions were compiled from 856 children in foster care, between preschool class and 7th grade, from 22 Swedish municipalities. Results show lower scores in intelligence, most prominent in working memory, adaptive behaviour, literacy and numeracy, and more behavioural problems. Ingroup comparisons showed less favourable scores for boys than girls in general, except in mathematics.

In the second study (R. Tordön, Bladh, Sydsjö, & Svedin, Submitted manuscript), the purpose was to explore how prerequisites changed following the first two years of a school-based intervention. Data from repeated tests of 475 children in foster care were compiled. We analysed educational prerequisites for compulsory school performance, such as intelligence and psychosocial, literacy and mathematical skills before and after the first two years of the Skolfam intervention. The results show improved skills in literacy, mathematics, and intelligence, but no improvement in adaptive behaviour or mental health symptoms. We conclude that intervention improves higher-order executive function, but lower-order executive or affective/social functioning not necessarily follow from the intervention.

The presentation will both describe results in the development of prerequisites from the intervention, as well as describing how children´s right to participate, their voices and other aspects of child perspective is preserved.

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Changes in contact visit between foster care children and their birth family during the COVID-19 lockdown in Spain

Ms. Lucía González-Pasarín (University of Malaga), Dr. Isabel M. Bernedo (University of Malaga), Dr. Jesús Oliver Pece (University of Malaga)

The purpose of this communication is to present the effects of the Spanish lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic on the regime of family contact between foster children and their biological family. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown have had, and will continue to have, a far-reaching impact across all levels of society. Lockdown in Spain meant the restriction of mobility and the impossibility of leaving one's home, except in special situations. Nonetheless, maintaining face-to-face contact between the children and their birth families was not an exception. This is the reason why it is of high importance to know how the children in foster care have experienced and faced this new and worrying situation.

Data were gathered through an online questionnaire in Spain that was completed by 100 foster families, including kinship and non-kinship foster care, from different regions of the country. Of this sample, only 61 foster care families had children in their care who had contact visit with their biological family. The variables analysed before and during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic were: who the child had contact with; frequency of contact; type of contact; the child's attitude and feelings about contact with family members; and if there was no contact during the lockdown, who took the decision. Descriptive and frequency analysis were carried out.

The results show that during the lockdown few children had any type of contact with their familiars (i.e. mother, father, siblings, grandparents or uncles and aunts), but the mother and siblings are the most stable figures. Frequency of contact was reduced but other types of contact were appeared in some cases (i.e. (video) phone calls, by social networks). Feelings like being angry before the contact or the attitude of not wanting to have contact were decreased. In addition, in the majority of cases were the Child Protection System who decided to cease the contact during the COVID-19 lockdown in Spain, and only in one case was the child in foster care.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown have brought about other forms of contact between the foster child and their family members, that may not have been taken into account before. While it is true that face-to-face visits are the most favourable, it is important to promote these other forms of contact, as videophone calls, that also make possible to maintain affective bonds between foster care children and their family. However, more effort and resources should be made to adapt optimally to this new situation. This would also allow the continuity of birth families so that contact is not diminished or ceased, as long as it is beneficial to the child in care. In this process, it would be of particular relevance to listen to the voice of children in care and allow them to contribute with how they would like to live and face the contact with their relatives during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Characterization of the decision making process in matching children with foster families in the Chilean child protection system

Mr. Jaime Muñoz (Universidad de la frontera), Dr. Pamela Jiménez (Universidad de la frontera), Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen)

Objectives

There is international consensus on the need to provide foster care and other family-like alternatives to children that need to be removed from their families due to serious violation of their rights. Foster care was introduced as a priority in the Chilean child protection law since 2005. However, the country has a strong residential tradition and the implementation of family-like alternatives has been slow and full of challenges. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the current practices related to foster care in Chile in order to detect potential areas for improvement. The process of matching children and foster families might be one of the areas that require urgent attention in the Chilean system. Matching is defined as the process of placing a child in a specific foster family, and it has been connected to children's outcomes during the placement (Zeijlmanns et al., 2018).

The objective of this study was to characterize the decision making processes regarding the placement of children who require non-kinship foster family through the description of guidelines and criteria used by practitioners to perform these procedures.

Method

This study explored the characteristics of the matching process in foster care in Chile for the first time. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 practitioners in 5 regions of the country, working in 6 foster care organizations with matching responsibilities. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. We used the Weighted Hierarchical Analysis (*Análisis Jerárquico Ponderado*; Perez-Luco, 2005) to extract, from what was reported by the participants, a structure of meanings that allowed a deep understanding of the factors that professionals consider when making matching decisions. The Decision-Making Ecology framework (DME; Baumann et al., 2011) was applied to structure the different elements influencing the matching decision.

Results

We identified a lack of protocols and systematized procedures for making matching decisions. The DME framework allowed us to organize the decision-making factors identified into 5 groups. Case factors and caregiver factors were the most frequently mentioned by practitioners. According to the analysis, both factors had the same weight in the final decision. Case factors more frequently mentioned referred to risk assessment and specific situations. Caregiver factors focused on characteristics of foster families, their needs and results of their assessment process. Moreover, the child factors (their characteristics or attachment style), the organization factors (organization's frameworks), and the decision-maker factors (intuition or experience with matching) were the others categories identified.

Conclusion

This study suggests that the foster family shortage in Chile could impact the matching decisions. Practitioners do not have many family-like alternatives and often need to compromise their decision making process, as found by Zeijlmans et al. (2018). The analysis shows that the importance of certain factors in making matching decisions was different depending on the timing of the judicial process. For example, caregivers' factors were important before removing children from the birth family; on the other hand, case factors were highlighted after removing children. These findings provide new knowledge about the matching process In Chile, and could be helpful to develop new strategies in matching decision process, organizing the complexity of information and developing guidelines.

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Child and youth participation in residential care and adoption - Rethinking adoption from the perspective of adopted children

Dr. Irene Salvo Agoglia (Alberto Hurtado University)

Collective paper session - Child and youth participation in residential care and adoption.
Contact person for the joint propossal: Manuela Garcia-Quiroga
Presenter: Irene Salvo Agoglia

The UNCRC (1989) emphasises that adoption policy and practice should be guided by the best interests of the child, and that it is key to consider the impact of adoption on children throughout their lives (Cantwell, 2014; Fenton-Glynn, 2013; Doughty, Meakings & Shelton, 2018; Palacios *et. al*, 2019). In addition, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that children be consulted and that all States parties inform them about the effects of adoption and ensure, through legislation, that their views are taken into account (Fenton-Glynn, 2013).

After 30 years of the ratification of the UNCRC (1989) by the Chilean State, the child-centred approach should be the dominant practical orientation for child protection and adoption policies, where the needs, wishes and rights of children in decision-making are key (Race & O'Keefe, 2017). In Chile, Article 3 of the current adoptive legislation (Law 19.620/1999), establishes that during the procedure, the judge must take into account the children's opinions, according to his/her age and degree of maturity. For its part, the current Bill Law on the Comprehensive Reform of the Adoption System in Chile (Bulletin No. 9.119/2018) further emphasizes the right to be heard by elevating it to a guiding principle (Article 12). However, adoption policies, practices, and research remain predominantly adult-centered and paternalistic (Marre & San Román, 2012; Salvo Agoglia & Marre, 2020). Research that considers the opinions of adopted children and young people is still very scarce worldwide (except Brodzinsky, 2011; Neil, 2012; Thomas et al., 1999). Children's agency in the adoption experience is still undervalued by families, scholars, practitioners and policy makers, especially in Spanish-speaking countries. However, evidence shows that children wish to participate more actively in decision-making that affects them, especially about where they will live and who will
care for them (Staines & Selwyn, 2020).

I present the first results of a larger study carried out in Chile (FONDECYT Project N°11200491 (2020-2023) Rethinking adoption from the perspective of Chilean adopted children). The objectives of this study are: 1) To explore and analyze Chilean adopted children's narratives and practices about their 'origins,' significant relationships, and their participation in the adoption process, and 2) To explore, analyze, and compare Chilean adopters, birth relatives, foster carers, and adoption professionals' narratives and practices about openness and child participation in the adoption process. The study has a mixed design. The first phase is quantitative (application of the National Survey "Transformadoption") and the second phase is based on a study of 12 cases with a narrative and participatory approach. Data production will be done through a multi-method approach which will allow me to collect a diverse and interrelated body of verbal, visual and material data with the participants. I present and discuss the findings of the first national survey on Adoption "Transformadoption", which show the perceptions and attitudes about adoption of adopted adolescents and adults (A) and adoptive parents (B), with a focus on openness and child participation in adoption processes.

Child and youth participation in residential care and adoption -Youth participation during and after care placements: why is this a central issue?

Dr. Isabelle Lacroix (Canada Research Chair in Evaluating Public Actions Related to Young People and Vulnerable Populations), Prof. Martin Goyette (École nationale d'Administration Publique), Dr. Rosita Vargas Diaz (Canada Research Chair in Evaluating Public Actions Related to Young People and Vulnerable Populations), Dr. Isabelle-Ann Leclair Mallette (Canada Research Chair in Evaluating Public Actions Related to Young People and Vulnerable Populations), Mrs. Isabelle Frechon (Université Versailles-Saint-Quentin/Paris Saclay)

Contact person for the joint proposal: Manuela Garcia-Quiroga

Youth participation in the child protection system has become a policy norm, influenced by international treaties such as the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and by countries' internal policies (Lacroix, 2016). Policy guidelines agree that young people are competent actors who should be allowed to develop their full potential and participate as full citizens in society. However, there is no systematic promotion of young people's collective participation, although research shows that it allows them to experience their future autonomy.

This communication aims to show the results of two comparative research France-Quebec dealing with participation, the first one during the placement and the other one after leaving the child protection system. In the first research 17 youth, 10 of Quebec, aged between 16 and 17 years old and, 7 of France aged between 17 and 20 who participated in the residents and users' committees were interviewed. The results show the contributions of participation for youth, but also for their placement environment. This participation puts them in a position of actors, which produces a sense of well-being, self-esteem, and empowerment. For the living environment, participation proves to be an advantage, because it allows the pacification of conflicts, linked to youth's knowledge of the institution's mission and constraints and their role as an intermediary between their peers and the institution.

In the second research 43 interviews were conducted with youth involved in self-help associations of former child protection alumni, 20 in Quebec, with youth aged between 16 and 35, and 23 in France, with youth aged between 21 and 32. It shows that the difficult conditions of transition to adulthood for these young people and their need for support act as triggers for initial engagement in self-help associations. Yet they observed a process of collectivization of their participation and engagement experience, where the reasons for maintaining their engagement are no longer strictly individual, but collective. This collective socialization in the organization produces a cycle of reciprocity, and to create a community of people who have lived on the same experiences, which allows them, to make sense together and to transform their subjective experience, and in many cases even to return the stigma of being a "placed child."

There is a tension between the protection paradigm and the children's rights. Institutional socialization is not conducive to develop their citizenship and integration at the exit of the system is reduced to their socio-economic citizenship. Their political citizenship is still a work in progress. Developing their capacity to make their voices heard both individually and collectively is a major challenge for their entry into adulthood. To this end, the conditions for the effective implementation of participation in placement and at the exit of the system depend on a profound change in the system

Child budgeting in Finland - a roadmap to implementation of the Rights of the Child in the budgetary process

Mrs. Julia Kuokkanen (Central Union for Child Welfare in Finland), Mrs. Sonja Falk (Central Union for Child Welfare in Finland)

The importance of investing in children and child impact assessment as a part of political decision-making process are the hot topics of the moment.

It is clear, that in order to make the most out of the limited public resources, it is important to know what services are being targeted on children, how they affect the various target groups, and how the whole service system operates.

Child budgeting is child-centric approach and a tool for implementing Child‘s rights. It´s main task is to provide information to support cross-administrative budgeting, so that investments in children are targeted on a child's rights basis as efficiently as possible.

According to the Convention of the Rights of the Child, children have a right to participate in decision making processes. The Committee on the Rights of the Child stresses the need for States Parties to consider children's rights at all stages of their budgetary processes and in all systems of governance, both at national and local level (paragraph 13 of General Comment 19). So far most of the EU countries have not implement child budgeting although they have signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Year 2020 as a part of the implementation of the Finnish Government Plan for Analysis, Assessment and Research program, an analysis on development of child budgeting model was prepared. The report was based on existing models and experiences worldwide, which were then adopted to the Finnish context.
The goal of the analyses was to find out:
1) International and national examples of child budgeting and population-based budgeting.
2) what results have been achieved so far in child budgeting and population-based budgeting and how the examples can be applied as part of the Finnish budgeting process
3) what kind of child budgeting tools can be modeled on the basis of examples
4) how municipal, provincial, and state actors can be supported in the implementation of child budgeting
5) how budget analysis for services for children, young people and families enables successful and efficient services at the interface between the municipality and the province

As a result a roadmap for child budgeting was introduced. The roadmap introduces child budgeting as part of the central government budget process and municipal financial management. It provides information on what proportion of public funds is spent on children, whether these resources are in line with the goals set for children's well-being and what are the effects of the allocated resources and their allocation principles on children's well-being and rights.
Moreover in 2021, a working group on child budgeting has been appointed by the Government Office in connection with the implementation of National Child Strategy. The task is to find out how procedures and competencies for child budgeting should be implemented and developed extensively over government terms.

This also makes Finland a first Nordic county to develop a child budgeting model on a state and municipal levels.

During our presentation we will present the key findings of the study, a roadmap of implementation of child budgeting and a model of different pathways to child participation in budgetary processes.

Child participation in reunification processes

Dr. Nuria Fuentes Peláez (University of Barcelona)

The right to child participation is well known and guidelines from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child constantly insist on the need to prioritise this. In the context of the protection system, Bouma, López, Knorth and Grietens (2018) define three levels that draw a path towards significant participation, starting with informing, followed by hearing and finally reaching involvement.

Family reunification processes that occur within the framework of the child protection system should follow this current. Family reunification is understood to be the objective when a child has been temporarily separated from his or her original family and they are taken into a residential centre or a foster family.

Family reunification is a complex process that involves making decisions that are crucial for the lives of the children and their families. Considering the role children have in these decisions is one of the objectives of this symposium. Another objective is to explore the attitudes of professionals with regards to child participation in this process and, finally, to approach professional practices that favour this perspective.

Therefore, the symposium presents different research papers about how child participation is considered in the reunification process in five countries: USA, Canada, Netherlands, Belgium and Spain, offering perspectives from different countries.

The debate will focus on how to favour child participation in the different interventions and decision-making process aiming for it to be significant and to transfer knowledge into practice.

Contributors of the symposium are:

Contribution 1:Children's participation in case planning to support reunification: Findings from California

Dr. Jill Duerr Berrick, Berkeley, University of California, USA

Contribution 2:Decision-making in reunification: criteria used by foster care workers and the extend that foster care workers consider foster children's voices

Dr. Johan Vanderfaeillie, Dr. Dorien Borms, Dr. Delphine West, Dr. Laura Gypen, Dr. Frank Van Holen
Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

Contribution 3: A Multiple Perspectives Approach to Decision-Making: Decision-making for Family Reunification in The Netherlands

Mrs. Mirte Teunissen[a], Dr. Anouk Goemans[a] , Dr. Frank van Holen[b], Dr. Johan Vanderfaillie[b], Dr. Harold Nefs[a], Dr. Huub Pijnenburg[c], Harm Damen[c], Dr. Paul Vedder[a]

[a]*Leiden University, The Netherlands*

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Contribution 4: Child participation in reunification processes- Children's Perspetives about Reunification in Canada and Spain

Dr. Marie-Andrée Poirier[a], Dr. M.Angels Balsells[b], Dr. Sonia Hélie[a]

[a]Université de Montréal, Canada

[b]Universitat de Lleida, Spain

Contribution 5:Professionals' roles and attitudes to promote children's participation in the reunification process: the experience of a group programme implementation to support reunification.

Dr. Nuria Fuentes-Peláez; Dr. Ainoa Mateos; Mrs. Sara Pérez; Dr. Belen Parra
Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

Child participation in reunification processes - Children's participation in case planning to support reunification: Findings from California

Prof. Jill D Berrick (University of California, Berkeley)

Introduction and objectives: Children are increasingly included as actors in child protection decision making, though the degree of their involvement varies significantly within countries by age and maturity, and across countries in scope. Drawing on data from a four-country comparative study, this presentation highlights findings relating to children's participation with a focus on data from California (U.S.A.).

Decisions to separate children from their parents or to return them home are especially consequential. Responsive child protection practice engages parents and children in the decision making process, and guidelines from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child offer further urgency to the issue. New strategies to engage family members such as Team Decision Making or Family Group Conferencing are designed specifically for the purpose of family engagement. In general, however, we know little about the degree to which child protection professionals engage children in decision making.

Methods: This study used an on-line survey of child protection professionals who make decisions about child removal (i.e., care orders) in four countries: England, Finland, Norway, and the U.S. (California). Responding to a vignette about a common child protection case relating to a five-year-old, and an 11-year old boy, study participants were asked a series of questions to determine if they would (a) include the child in decision making; (b) provide information to the child about the context of decisions; and/or (c) collect information from the child about the nature of the situation. 722 respondents were included in the study, 260 from California.

Results: Approximately three-quarters of all respondents indicated that they would speak with the 5-year-old child early in the process; almost one-fifth (18%) said they would talk with the child at some point in the process, and a very small percentage (4%) indicated they would speak with the child if a decision had already been made to go to court. Respondents were more likely to include a child of 11 years. California respondents were equally likely to speak with the child regardless of age. California staff stood out from their international peers in the degree to which they indicated the importance of collecting information from the child. California (and English) staff were also more inclined to indicate the importance of engaging the child in determining future placement preferences.

Conclusion: Findings from the study suggest subtle, but important differences between country contexts in how and when children are included in decision making. These differences and their import for cross-country considerations will be discussed.

Child participation in reunification processes - Decision-making in reunification: consideration of foster children's voices?

Prof. Johan Vanderfaeillie (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Ms. Dorien Borms (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Ms. Delphine West (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Ms. Laura Gypen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Dr. Frank Van Holen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Introduction

Although a significant number of foster children eventually return to their birth parents, evidence-based models for permanency planning are scarce, and there is a lack of clear decision-making criteria for reunification. The actual research aimed at establishing further knowledge regarding reunification in Flanders. This study examined what considerations are used to decide for or against reunification, and the extend that foster care workers take foster children's voices into account.

Methods

Concept mapping was used. In the first phase, 45 foster care workers from 6 foster care agencies generated 53 unique criteria. In the second phase, 26 of these 45 foster care workers grouped the unique answers "in a way that made sense for them". At the same time criteria were rated regarding their importance. Finally, multi-dimensional scaling and hierarchic cluster analysis was used in order to discover the underpinning concepts.

Results

Multi-dimensional scaling and hierarchic cluster analysis resulted in six clusters: (1) parents provide safety and put the child at the centre, (2) conditions for parents, (3) interest of the child, (4) reunification is supported, (5) the foster child is supported and (6) readiness for collaboration by parents. The order of the clusters represents the mean importance foster care workers accorded to the criteria belonging to a cluster, with an earlier mentioned cluster representing a higher importance. Two of six clusters explicitly consider the voices and interest of foster children.

Discussion

Foster care workers use many criteria when making decisions regarding a reunification of a foster child. However, these criteria can be grouped into six clusters. Most important are safety of the child and the ability of parents to put the foster child at the centre. The second cluster contains criteria referring to skills and conditions for the parents. Indeed, the home environment should be improved and/or issues that were a reason for placement should be solved. The third cluster refers to the wishes and the best interest of the child. This cluster shows that foster care workers consider the voices of the foster children. The fourth cluster refers to the communalization of care. After placement parents are entitled to help from their immediate context and youth care. The fifth cluster refers to support for the child. Foster care workers acknowledge that a reunification also for the foster child is big step. Finally, in order to make a reunification work, parents need to be prepared to collaborate with services offering help after reunification as is shown by the criteria of the sixth cluster. Concluding: although much emphasis is put on the abilities and skills of birth parents, foster care workers consider the best interest and voice of the foster child.

Child participation in reunification processes – Professionals' roles and attitudes to promote children's participation in the reunification process: the experience of a group programme implementation to support reunification

Dr. Nuria Fuentes Peláez (University of Barcelona), Dr. Ainoa Mateos (University of Barcelona), Dr. Sara Pérez-Hernando (University of Barcelona), Dr. Belen Parra Ramajo (University of Barcelona)

Introduction and objectives

One of the critical focal points of the child protection system is reunification. Professional support of families that are under temporary protection, with the goal of reunification is necessary for helping families towards successful return home in a safe and permanent way. Without this support, the conditions that contributed to child abuse and neglect will likely persist.

Part of this support is provided through educational programmes. In the implementation of these programmes the role and attitudes of the professionals have been identified in the research as key aspects to reach the objectives established.

Drawing on data from the evaluation of a programme to support reunification in Spain, this presentation will focus and highlight the professionals' role and attitudes towards child participation.

Method

The study uses a mixed methodology and a multi-informant design. On one side, the data is collected from 119 professionals who work in the child protection system with a good practices questionnaire designed expressly for this research. On the other, focus groups are held with children (14 groups) between 8 and 18 years old who have participated in the programme. Regarding the data from the questionnaire, a descriptive analysis has been carried out, significant differences are indicated before and after the application of the programme and statistical correlation analysis. Regarding data from the focus groups, content analysis has been carried out.

Results

The results show a high degree of consensus among professionals regarding the promotion of the active participation of children in foster care and reunification. The study found that older and more experienced professionals are more open and inclined to promote participation in family reunification processes. In addition, the results show a change in professionals' perception of child participation after the application of the programme. Additionality, the strong correlations are found with positive parenting approach, and the performance of professional role.

On the other hand, the qualitative results provide information about which aspects children consider favouring their participation. The positive group climate is associated with participants expressing their feelings. When the professional uses comprehensive language and they are involved in establishing close relationships, the children feel that they can freely express their feelings and concerns and they that they are being listened to. In addition, they trust the professionals and feel supported by them.

Conclusions and implications for practice

The study shows that the professional has a positive attitude towards child participation and that this is increased when they implement strategies that favour it. Encouraging participation is therefore a professional competence, it is not just about knowing, but also about doing what a professional can do to promote child participation and thereby become a guarantor of children's rights and moving away from a model that focuses on mere parental control. The practical implications of the results invite a general review of the training of professionals in the child protection system and, in particular, the family reunification processes.

Child participation in reunification processes- Children's Perspectives about Reunification in Canada and Spain

Prof. Poirier Marie-Andree (École de service social, Équipe de recherche sur le placement et l'adoption en protection de la jeunesse,Université de Montréal), Dr. Angells Balsells Bailon (Departament de Pedagogia Facultat d'Educació, Psicologia i Treball Social , Universitat de Lleida)

The number of children and adolescents in care in Spain is 43,902. Of these, 14,104 children were in residential care and 19,641 with foster families. Family foster care is the most adopted measure by protection services with a clear predominance of extended family care - 35% foster care versus 65% kinship family (Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare, 2018). In Spain, it is very difficult to access reliable statistics on aspects such as the number of cases in which family reunification is actualised, or the failure rate of the reunifications carried out (Balsells et al., 2015). The Quebec picture is similar, with 50% of the children whose situation is handled by protection services being placed in substitute care within 4 years of the start of the intervention. Fifty-eight percent of these children will live in foster care only, 21% will be placed in institutional care only, and the same proportion will experience episodes of foster care and residential care. The most recent data available shows that kinship care is increasing and that it concerns more than one third of children in care. Within 4 years of entering services, 48% of placed children will experience reunification but 17% of those reunited will face a re-entry in care (Hélie, Poirier, Esposito, forthcoming, 2015) Prior studies have made it possible to identify certain characteristics of children and services provided that predict reunification and its success: length of stay in care, age, presence of behavioural difficulties and ethnic origin (Shaw, 2006; Wells & Guo, 1999). However, there is little research to illustrate the clinical aspects of children's experience of family reunification. This knowledge is essential in order to develop practices favouring their greater involvement in the family reunification process. This communication will present part of the results driven from a Quebec longitudinal study, which one of the objectives is to predict re-entry in care among a sample of 150 children reunited from substitute care, using descriptors of various clinical activities surrounding reunification.File analysis will document, among other things, the following variables: the frequency of contact with parents during the placement; the presence of a progressive return; the support offered to the children before and after family reunification; and the frequency of contact between the child and his social worker during the family reunification process. These results will be compared with the knowledge developed in Spain as part of the development and evaluation of a parenting skills programme to specific parenting skills at each stage of the foster care and reunification process. This study suggests that it is advisable to combine this intervention with programmes that include more general parenting skills to address child-raising skills and include families in general support. Thus, the intervention must be oriented both towards children and parents, adapting parent-child activities to the age, interests and needs of the children as well as providing feedback on the successes experienced in each encounter between parents and children (Landsman, Boel-Studt, & Malone, 2014) and oriented specifically to improve the quality of the parent-child relationship through work on specific skills (Balsells et al., 2018; Dakof et al., 2010). The presentation of results will focus on the perspective and experiences of children by exploring, in each country: What is the profile of children experiencing reunification? What are the needs of children in the reunification process? How is reunification promoted and achieved in both countries? Initiatives developed in each of the countries (e.g., a book explaining reunification to children in care developed in Canada, an intervention program for children in Spain) will be presented to illustrate how to promote children's participation.

Child participation in technical guidelines of outpatient programs in child protection services: scope and limitations

Ms. Dominique Roig (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso), Ms. Sofía Parra (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso), Ms. Sofia Molina (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso), Dr. Manuela Garcia Quiroga (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso)

Introduction: Among children's rights, participation plays an important role as a protective factor for their development and wellbeing, and as a means for achieving other rights. In Chile, research in child participation is scarce, especially in the national child protection system (SENAME). In this context, it is crucial to promote and safeguard a meaningful child participation (including three dimensions: informing the child, hearing their views and opinions, and involving them in the whole process of decision making regarding their care), considering the impact that decisions taken in protection systems might have in their lives.

Research questions: This study strives to understand SENAME's concept of child participation, how SENAME's concept of the child plays a role in the spaces and methods of participation it promotes, and comprehend the scope and limitations of child participation in technical guidelines of SENAME's outpatient programs.

Method: A document analysis was conducted. A total of 14 technical guidelines were analysed through a grounded theory procedure.

Results: The concept "participation" in these documents is applied inconsistently, and mechanisms and spaces of participation for children seem nonspecific and diffuse. Nonetheless, the principle of evolving capacities of the child and the concepts of substantive participation and territory appear to be crucial in SENAME's definition of participation in theory and practice. The act of informing the child appears to be conceptualized as a separate process from participation; adults related to the child and/or in their care seem to receive more information than the child in decision-making. In the documents, children are seen either as active and resilient beings that are capable of resignifying their experiences of abuse and neglect, or as victims or vulnerable beings that must be protected by adults. This double concept appears to limit their possibilities of participating by themselves; thus, the family or caretakers of the child take a central role in the documents as guardians of their rights and their participation process. Instances where the child participates by themselves are not well defined and/or separated from instances where the family participates as a collective, implying risks such as false consensus or generating fear in the child to voice their opinion.

Conclusions: Though the technical guidelines are coherent to Chile's social, economic, and cultural context, and have a solid theoretical basis, this is insufficiently translated into practices, spaces, and techniques to work with children in SENAME's outpatient programs. Each guideline document must define different specific techniques to encourage child participation according to the needs of the population their respective outpatient programs care for. All three dimensions of the meaningful participation model (informing, hearing and involving) should be considered in future guidelines to further promote the child's wellbeing.

This presentation is part of the following funded research projects:

FONDECYT INICIACION Nº11190298: Participation of children and adolescents in decision making in alternative care protection systems: Incorporating the voices of different actors in the process (PI Manuela Garcia-Quiroga)

Child Protection Systems: A Global Typology

Prof. Marit Skivenes (University of Bergen)

Introduction: Across the spectrum of political ideologies there is, in principle, widespread agreement that the state has a legitimate role in protecting children from harm. This view is codified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Ratification of the UNCRC commits states to pursue positive child outcomes; as a result, many nations have used the UNCRC as a framework to develop social policies that can secure the safety and best interests of children. Many countries have formulated institutionalized networks of public and private arrangements to protect children against violence, abuse, neglect, maltreatment, or exploitation – all forms of maltreatment explicitly articulated in Article 19 of the UNCRC. The design and implementation of international child protection systems have been studied and categorized, the result being a prevailing typology that distinguishes between *risk-oriented* and *service-oriented* systems (Gilbert, 1997). More recently, child protection policy approaches that reflect a *child-centric orientation* have emerged (Gilbert et al., 2011). The three established typologies, reflective of many western industrialized countries, may not capture child protection on a global scale.

This symposium introduces a global typology for child protection systems:
- child exploitation-protective systems,
- child deprivation-protective systems,
- child maltreatment-protective systems,
- child well-being-protective systems, and
- child rights-protective systems.

Drawing on data from 50 countries, the new typology is based on a notion of cumulative hierarchies of childhood risk and typify the focal strategy for protecting children. Five countries are showcased (Belgium, Finland, India, Russia, and USA) offering an illustration of each of the five systems.

The first type is designed to protect against extreme forms of *child exploitation*. These countries include legislation to guard against serious forms of harm including, for example, child trafficking, infanticide, child labor, female genital mutilation, and child slavery. Second is a type that is intended to protect against *child deprivation.*In some countries, many children are deprived of parental care either due to orphanhood (usually due to HIV/AIDs) or due to historical systems of forced family separation (some Eastern European countries, for example). The third type has a focal point of protection against *child maltreatment,* with a relatively narrow orientation in scope for interventions into the private sphere. Fourth are systems that include a broader lens, oriented to a wide conceptualization of protecting *child well-being.*In these countries, children´s needs are the yardstick for interventions from the child protection system, with a wide array of voluntary family support services on offer. And the fifth type is oriented to protect *children's rights*, where children have a strong standing, where the child is recognized as an individual with his/her own interests, and where the CRC is fully incorporated in legislation and practice. The typology of ideal types falls along a continuum, with each system addressing a wider set of childhood risks. Embedded within the framework are domains that reflect a country's definition of need, cultural norms, views about children as subjects or objects, and resource capacity. Using broad labels to characterize these differences, the boundaries between protective orientations are porous, and individual countries may have characteristics that straddle at least two types of system.

Objective: This symposium will orient participants to the principle similarities and differences across the global typology with a focus on children's needs and rights. Presenters from various countries will describe the main features of their country system within this overarching framework. The global typology for child protection has implications for social policy and social development as policymakers continue to refine and strengthen their approach to family support and child protection.

Child protection systems: A global typology - Promoting children´s development: A case study of Belgium

Prof. Johan Vanderfaeillie (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Mr. Erik Van Dooren (Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling Brussel), Mrs. Jessica Segers (Service SOS Enfants, Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance)

Belgium is a complex country with three separate, though related child protection systems organized largely by geographic region. Communities differ regarding the definitions used and the collaboration with judicial authorities. The problem of child abuse or neglect is framed as a health, welfare, or familial problem of the child that is best addressed through a supportive response to the child and his/her family. The focal point of concern is the child (as opposed to a focal concern on the caregiver and his/her behaviors or intensions). The need for intervention is, in part, determined by assessing the effects of maltreatment on the child's developmental need and the best interest of the child. Preferably, help is offered to the whole family. All citizens of Belgium have a moral obligation to ensure the well-being of children. As such, a variety of children's needs may come to the attention of child protection or ancillary service providers. In these situations, an approach that values parental partnership and voluntary engagement is preferred.

Child Protection Systems: A Global Typology - Protecting children from deprivation: A case study of Russia

Prof. Zhanna Chernova (National Research University "Higher School of Economics")

Russia has a disproportionate share of its children living without parental care. Many of these "social orphans" live in large, residential institutions. Conditions for Russian children declined considerably during the transition to a market economy in the 1990s, shifting more children into residential care. In recent years, however, policy efforts to reform residential care, to move children to less restrictive care environments, and to provide support services to families have increased.

Primary prevention services are, at this point, more aspirational than actual, though there is movement in the country to develop and implement these supports. Secondary prevention services are provided, though in some regions, the soviet legacy of admonishing parents may still prevail. Tertiary prevention, including kinship, foster, and residential care dominate as the state's response to children in need. With a large percentage of children living outside of their home of origin, Russia can be seen as a child protection system focused on risk of *child deprivation.*

Child Protection Systems: A Global Typology - Protecting children from exploitation: A case study of India

Dr. Subhashree Sanyal (Visva-Bharati University, West Bengal)

India's children represent almost 20% of the world's child population. The country has developed an array of legal instruments to protect children from harm, and has instituted guidelines to ensure that systems and processes are child-friendly, whenever possible. Nevertheless, the country's infrastructure for protecting children is still in a developmental stage. As a result, child protection targets children at risk of *child exploitation,*conceptualizing protection well beyond narrow definitions of child maltreatment. These severe problems include child marriage, child labor, child trafficking, and children experiencing armed conflict; serious child abuse is also considered a child protection concern.

India's size and diversity create challenges for implementing a national, uniform approach to child protection. Even the age of the child, defined in national policy as age 18, is contested in some communities based upon cultural or religious beliefs. Family support efforts at the local level are carried out, in large part, by NGOs. Child protection, on the other hand, when it is brought to state actors' attention, includes a public response using Child Welfare Officers (CWO) working for a Child Welfare Committee. The CWO is responsible for assessing and responding to incidents of child abuse. Residential and other forms of out-of-home care are used with some frequency.

The present paper highlights the typicalities of various child protection issues in India and tries to draw global attention on the issues typical the third world.

Child Protection Systems: A Global Typology - Protecting children from maltreatment: A case study of the U.S.

Prof. Jill D Berrick (UC Berkeley)

The U.S. has long been identified as risk-oriented in its approach to child protection. The system is designed to respond, principally, to risks of *child maltreatment.*An elaborate system of response, including public child welfare staff, NGOs, and court personnel are engaged in responding to reports of maltreatment, taking steps to ensure the safety of children who have been maltreated or who are at risk of harm due to maltreatment. As a result, although many children in the U.S. face substantial risks to their well-being associated with poverty, disabling conditions, and other childhood difficulties, the child protection system has a narrow focus.

This presentation will review some of the dimensions of the U.S. child protection system that distinguish it from other country systems, focusing on the target of protection, the organizational context, and the resulting tension between parental and child rights.

Child Protection Systems: A Global Typology: Promoting children´s rights: Finland

Prof. Tarja Pösö (Tampere Unversity)

All countries except the U.S. have ratified the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, and most countries have developed legislation to be responsive to the Convention. A few countries have embraced the notion of child rights and use their child protection system – in part – to instantiate these ideas into law. The Nordic systems of child protection have developed affirmative approaches for protecting children against *rights deprivations*, conceiving of child protection as a broad and comprehensive package of supports and services that respond to children's needs as rights-bearing individuals.

An overview of the Finnish child protection system shows how children are included as decision makers in crafting a response to their needs, and how their individual rights (separate from parents and family) must be considered in decision making.

Child Sexual Abuse: A holistic Continuum of care: Lessons from Zimbabwe

Dr. Mildred Mushunje (Midlands State University, School of Social Work)

Introduction

In this discussion we seek to share experiences from Zimbabwe on how children that are sexually abused are cared for. We discuss the roles of the various players and how these converge to provide a continuum of care for the children. Using statistics from a local NGO, we also discuss issues of access to care and treatment of sexually abused children.

Background

Child Sexual abuse is dealt with under the Zimbabwe Children's Act through a multi-sectoral child protection system. Because of the burgeoning numbers of orphans, the care and protection of children is increasingly regarded as the collective responsibility of all members of society, with all systems of social provision working together to provide a holistic response. In keeping with this responsibility and a commitment to the protection and care of sexually abused children, Zimbabwe developed a Protocol on the Multi-Sectoral Management of Sexual Abuse (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012; Mushunje & Mafico, 2007). The Protocol establishes the respective responsibilities of government ministries, NGOs, and community structures, as illustrated below.

The multi-sectoral network in the Victim Friendly System

The multi-sectorial approach comprises the Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) which is found within the police system. The police department is responsible for escorting children for medical examination following abuse, explaining the ensuing process, and referring them to specialised clinics such as those run by NGOs such as the Family Support Trust. The Ministry of Health and Child Care runs survivor-friendly clinics at various health centres and monitors units offering equivalent services for the medical care and support of children following abuse in terms of the guidelines for health workers in the management of sexual violence (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012). Services provided include forensic examinations by medical staff in terms of the Procedure and Evidence Act as Amended (Government of Zimbabwe, 2004). Where necessary, priority access to emergency medical care is provided, including post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) within 72 hours. PEP is short-term antiretroviral treatment to reduce the likelihood of HIV infection after potential exposure, either occupationally or through sexual intercourse (World Health Organisation, 2015).

Conclusion

The establishment of the multi-sectoral system has made addressing CSA more structured and systematic. However, resources are still a challenge. There remain insufficient personnel to respond to cases of CSA. Financial resources also continue to hamper and compromise the response time reports.

Recommendations

1. There needs to more resources towards child protection services. This should be catered for within the overall national financial budget
2. A multi-sectoral approach is key for effective child protection and this should be strengthened with resources

Child-centered research and practice in the child welfare services for unaccompanied refugee minors in Bergen municipality

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The Child Welfare Services for unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs) in Bergen municipality has the sole responsibility for the settlement URMs in Bergen. Our services include administrative procedures and placements in foster homes, institutions, joint homes, host families and private housing with or without follow up. Each URM has a contact person (case worker) at the agency and is offered services until they are 25 years old.

We collaborated with NORCE, a national leading research institution, and conducted a comprehensive survey on the URMs. The survey explored how the URM evaluate the services which are provided by the welfare services, education and access to social support. The survey also included standardized and validated questionnaires on potential traumatic events, mental and somatic health, protective factors and health related quality of life. These validated questionnaires have also been used in other studies such as “Youth@Hordaland” and “Young in Foster care which are two Norwegian epidemiological studies. Thus, we were able to compare our data with other youth populations. 101 URM aged 15 or older were invited to participate in the survey, of which 81 responded.

The results show among others:

- More than 50 % of the participants are eligible to be diagnosed with Post-traumatic stress syndrome
- On average, the participants have experienced 7 traumatic events (1 experienced traumatic event qualify to follow up by a psychologist)
- Most participants like attending school, but do not think the curriculum is adjusted to their learning needs
- Most participants are satisfied with our services and have high level of trust to us
- Most participants have good peer support, but not social support by adults (outside of the agency)

We involved URMs in the following way:

- We tested the initial questionnaire on 3 former URMs and adjusted the scheme according to their input
- We invited all participants to a meeting in which we presented the data and gathered their thoughts on the survey and the data
- We recruited youth to participate in an advisory board to discuss how we can improve our practice based on the results.
- We gathered advice from several youth through messages and videos
- We presented the youth‘s feedback to the agency and discussed ideas related to how we can improve the wellbeing of our youth having their feedback in mind

Feedback from the youth are among others:

- We need to focus more on mental health and on expanding their network

- We need to facilitate more TRT-groups (Trauma Recovery Techniques). It is a group-based program in which participants learn different techniques to manage stress symptoms caused by traumatic events. The agency has 4 certified TRT-counselors.

Based on the feedback, the agency has already taken some steps to improve our services, among others:

- We established two working groups which will focus on network building, voluntary section, social inclusion and mental health. The aim is to identify gaps in our practice and gather relevant knowledge regarding each topic, which each department in the agency can use to develop action plans adjusted to their assignments.
- We have established a permanent Youth Advisory Board to:

    1. Create awareness of the needs of youth in our care

- Advocate improvement of the services we provide on the behalf of the youth in our care
- Promote youth engagement in decisions about their lives

Child-centred practice in foster care in Ireland: A 4-Dimensional approach to understanding & minimising placement disruption

Ms. Caroline Roe *(University of Limerick & TUSLA, Child & Family Agency)*

Background:

There is significant research on the harmful impact of moves on children in State care and the effect this has on outcomes for this vulnerable group. There exists, however, a deficit of research into placement breakdowns and the interplay between the profile of children entering care, the profile of foster carers and the capacity of carers and child care agencies alike to meet children's needs.

Objectives:

To gain a greater understanding of the profile of children entering foster care in Ireland and reasons why placements are breaking down so that the risk of placement disruption can be minimised and a child-centred approach to placement matching can be developed.

In contrast other studies, to use the views and experiences of foster carers to lend a fresh perspective to the analysis.

Method:A retrospective, mixed methods design was employed which involved:

1. A desk review of Disruption Reports (n=142) submitted to the Foster Care Committees in the Child & Family Agency (TUSLA) over a 6 year period (2012-2018).
2. Semi-structured interviews undertaken with a sample of foster carers.
3. Review of relevant administrative data collected by TUSLA through the Child in Care Database, (including the profile of need in the child care population) and Register of Foster Carers (including the profile of foster carers).

Results:

The results were analysed using a 4-dimensional approach based on: (i) Child related factors, (ii) Birth Family Related Factors, (iii) Foster Family Related Factors, and (iv) Agency Related Factors.

Analysed in this way, the research is highlighting the following:

- some foster placements, including general and kinship care, are more vulnerable to disruption than others;
- traditional assessment models are underestimating the range and level of need within the child care population;
- the nature of disruptions varies according to a number of child related features (e.g. behaviour), although other factors also contribute;
- Without appropriate support and training foster carers are ill-equipped to deal with the needs of highly traumatised children.

Conclusions:

The findings indicate that there is a complex interplay between the needs of children entering foster care, the role of parents, the capacity of the foster carers to meet the children's needs and the ability of the care agency to oversee and provide for vulnerable children. They point to the need for changes to assessment and decision making in child welfare and protection at first point of entry to the care system and the need for a multi-disciplinary, child-centred approach, to foster care placements.

The findings also indicate the need for changes in practice in social work education and training, in particular, the need to develop practice tools for social workers to aid placement matching and the need to support the placement of children in foster care based on predictive criteria as the service best equipped to meet their needs and maximise life outcomes.

Children and adolescents from vulnerable families and their experiences of everyday life

Dr. Jana Rapus Pavel (Assistant professor, Department of Social pedagogy, Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana)

The paper presents results of a study entitled *Otroci in mladostniki iz ranljivih družin o virih pomoči* (Children and Adolescents from vulnerable families and their experiences of the Sources of Help), which was carried out by the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana. The study's focus is on the perspectives of children and adolescents coming from vulnerable families. Family vulnerability manifests itself in many forms, but what all these families have in common is that they all experience an accumulation of problems in various areas of life. These problems are often multidimensional, intertwined and cannot be addressed as an isolated individual issue. Family vulnerability can directly affect the life course of these children and adolescents and reflect in a limited number of opportunities for quality life. In the study we ask children and adolescents coming from vulnerable families how they perceive and experience the family and their own daily circumstances. The aim was to determine which needs they underscore and what gives them greatest support in a different life situations of vulnerability. Our field of research was built on the modern paradigm of childhood sociology, which underscores children's active role in forming their own reality. We also took into account that children and adolescents are not homogenous entities, that they differ from each other in various factors as well as in their ability to influence the (re)construction of their own life and the society they live in. In a participative action research study volunteer field researchers and students from the Faculty of Education of Ljubljana worked together to collect data. In this process we took into account that a different approach is needed to study children than when studying adults. We use a child-centered approach to study children's reality by using narrative research methods. The qualitative research included 25 children and adolescents (aged between 10 and 16) from six families, who were approached in collaboration with various governmental and nongovernmental organizations and institution. The data were then analyzed by using the qualitative data analysis methods. The results reveal heterogeneity of individual vulnerability situations. They express anguish experienced by the children, which is caused by the lack of material goods or suitable housing. In this context the children and adolescents draw attention to the subsequent lack of privacy or calmness, problems with sleeping and lack of rest. The results also show optimism and resourcefulness when dealing with problems, a process in which they see themselves as an important actor in bringing order to the different life situations. The children especially point out, as important sources of support, the desired changes in the primary family, followed by the emphasis on the support of networks of friends and friendly ties, which help to lift the burden. The conditions within the family influence the children's experiences, especially whether regarding their feeling of safety and wellbeing. Our general conclusion is that in the perspectives of children from vulnerable families the desire for social integration and normalization of their everyday life has a significant presence.

Key words: the perspective of the children, vulnerable families, everyday life, participatory action research, narrative methods

Children and agency - Children's agency in a refugee camp – focusing interactions between children and staff members

Ms. Fränzi Buser (University of Zurich)

Children and young people make up about one third of all refugees in Switzerland; most of them are accompanied by their families (or parts of them). Until now, accompanied refugee children have hardly been in the focus of research, so very little is known about their everyday life and their realities. Addressing this research gap, the ongoing PhD-project "Accompanied refugee children and their everyday life – a multi-sited ethnography" examines the everyday life of children currently living with their families in a refugee camp on the basis of participant observations for over a year as well as ethnographic interviews with children, family members, staff, volunteers and teachers. The project is theoretically embedded in Childhood Studies as well as practice theories, focusing in particular on children's everyday practices – their interactions, bodily practices, the materiality of practices as well as time and space.

The aim of this contribution is to provide insights into intergenerational encounters between children and employees in a refugee camp – a field shaped by uncertainties as well as power and inequality relations. Although parents in the refugee camp are addressed as guardians and primarily responsible for their children, staff members play various – sometimes divergent – roles in the everyday life of the children: they provide e.g. toys and writing utensils that children can borrow, they support, look after and sometimes fool around with the children, but they also educate and sanction the children in many ways (e.g. by means of a "red card"). At the same time, encounters between children and employees of the camp are pre-structured by asylum policy as well as general bureaucratic logic, such as the opening hours of the office, which limit the children's access to the staff member as well as to the playroom next to the office, with which the children then deal in different ways. Drawing on ethnographic material from the ongoing PhD-project, this presentation thus focuses on interactions between children and staff member in a refugee camp and how children's agency is thereby enabled (or not). Understanding agency as relational and as an effect of practices, social situations and their people as well as the meaning of artefacts in these situations will be analyzed. This relational understanding of agency has the potential to break victimizing views on refugee children as particularly vulnerable, but still does not generalize them as being always capable of acting. Even though refugee camps do not actually count as residential homes, they are a clear example of institutionalized childhood and youth which are often overlooked by social work research. In this respect, these insights into intergenerational encounters between children and staff members in a refugee camp may be generalized to the institutional context of residential child care.

Children and Agency - Expressing Agency through the everyday: Food as an example of resistance, connection and power for looked after children

Dr. Ruth Emond (University of Stirling)

The rituals and practices surrounding food are often taken-for-granted and enmeshed in our everyday lives and memories. Food can be a powerful symbol of care and of our relationships to others. This presentation discusses the key findings from two ESRC research projects, which explored the role of food, and food practices in residential and foster care in Scotland. It focuses on the part food plays in the expression of agency within the context of looked after care. We found that food was used by children in a myriad of ways to make (as well as test and break), relationships, to show trust and make connections between staff and children. Using an ethnographic approach, we provide an analysis of food practices in residential care to explore the atypical nature of children's homes as a threefold space that combines characteristics of 'home', 'institution', and 'workplace'. Residential staff invested considerable effort into recreating a 'family-like' home but the practices and ideals they drew on could be interpreted and experienced in different ways. We demonstrate the difficulty of delineating between 'homely', 'institutional', or work oriented practices. While care workers tried to juggle conflicting demands in child-centred ways, the spaces they created could at times be experienced as constraining by the children and as inhibiting a sense of belonging. Within these everyday spaces, food offered children a 'safe' means of exerting their agency. It was often through food that children's perspectives on their experiences was enacted. However, given its status as 'mundane', the potential food offered as a means of expressing perspective was often overlooked.

Children and agency - The double view approach

Prof. Hanne Warming (Roskilde University)

The double view approach: Changing the agential spaces of children in residential care by turning categorisations upside down

Children who are placed in residential care, or who are objects of social interventions in other ways, are typically regarded as deviating from what is considered normal and desirable, or as being at risk of pathological development. The core goal of placement in residential care is to (re)establish a child's normality, at least to the extent possible. However, for many of these children, this goal is never attained, and the paths towards it are littered with experiences of failure, lack of recognition, discipline and defeat, which have negative consequences for their agential space.

In a five-year project entitled 'Deviance as a potential resource', we explored whether and how the special characteristics and habits of children in residential care, which are normally regarded as a risk or simply as undesirable, may be regarded, supported and further developed as a resource, and we investigated how such an approach could potentially change the agential space of a child or young person. We sought to do this while still acknowledging the vulnerability and challenges related to the characteristics/habits in question.

The project adopted an action research approach. It involved not only researchers from Roskilde University, but also the departments for residential care in two Danish municipalities, two residential care institutions (one for young children, and the other for young people) and 24 foster care families. Methodologically, the project combined a range of methods, including: an 'upside down-workshop' (a method we developed during the project and which was inspired by the future workshop method), De Bono's six thinking hats, a river-metaphor-interview, as well as observations and ethnographic interviews with children, young people, foster parents and social workers.

We found that it was possible to invert conventional views about most characteristics and habits. We also found that it was possible to adopt a 'double view' approach whereby these came to be regarded both as vulnerabilities/challenges and resources - although this was harder and required training over time. Moreover, we found that the impact on agential space and life quality – not only that of the children and young people, but also that of the social workers and foster parents - could be significant. However, we also identified various individual, institutional and societal obstacles both to implementing the double view approach and realizing its potential. We concluded that double view approach can change the relational and intertwined agential spaces of children/young people and their care persons, but also that implementing the approach involves coping with various individual, institutional and societal barriers, even if everybody involved seems to agree on a 'resource-approach'.

Children and agency in residential child care

Prof. Florian Eßer (University of Osnabrück)

The papers which will be presented in this invited symposium analyse the everyday of residential child care from the theoretical perspective of children's agency. This concept has got a long tradition within Childhood Studies and aims to pay credit to the perspective of children in society. The presenters will explore the theoretical and empirical potential of this sociological approach for research on residential and family care.

The presentations will give empirical evidence of different aspects of children's agency in residential care which all imply an understanding that locates agency beyond voice or formal aspects of participation. For example they show how children's agency is defined through children's and staff's bodies when both touch each other. They will also reconstruct which part materiality, like food, plays in the expression of agency. Furthermore intergenerational connections between children and adults and their impact on agency will be analysed. And it will be asked which kind of agency is deemed appropriate for children in care by questioning processes of stigmatization and categorization. The papers thus all share a relational understanding of agency, which is contemporary discussed in broader academic fields of Social Theory. The aim of the symposium is to help develop a relational concept of agency for residential child care practice and research which includes bodies, materiality and spaces in residential child care. Particular care will be given to the question how this agentic perspective may be compatible with the potentially high vulnerability of children in care.

We are going to discuss these questions and the implications of a relational approach for the practice and theory of residential child care from an interdisciplinary perspective: The speakers represent different academic disciplines (Social Work, Sociology, Education) and stages of career.

Contributors and papers (in alphabetic order):

Fränzi Buser (University of Zürich/CH) – *Children's agency in a refugee camp: Focusing interactions between children and staff members*

Ruth Emond (University of Stirling/UK) – *Expressing agency through the everyday: Food as an example of resistance, connection and power for looked after children*

Florian Eßer (University of Osnabrück/GER) – *Children's agency in residential child care: Theoretical challenges and empirical potentials*

Hanne Warming (Roskilde University/DK) – *The double view approach: Changing the agential spaces of children in residential care by turning categorisations upside down*

Children at risk in Mexico: issues, policies, and interventions

Prof. Martha Frías Armenta (Universidad de Sonora)

Children represent approximately one-third of the population of Mexico (around 39.2 million). One of the main problems they face is poverty, which increases risk for malnourishment and the likelihood of suboptimal social, cognitive, physical, and emotional development. This chapter will review key issues faced by children in Mexico, highlight core policies and laws that protect children's rights and criminalize maltreatment, and explore current policies and interventions aimed at addressing maltreatment.

The signing of the Convention of the Rights of Children in Mexico has prompted a legislative shift away from a focus on parental correctional rights toward the protection and promotion of children's human rights. The Convention promoted amendments to the law and the development of public policies aimed at protecting and ensuring the human rights of children. In summary, the last few years have witnessed critical changes in policies and laws related to the protection of children's rights. However, it is necessary for those efforts to be well-implemented for governmental actions to have a measurable impact on people's lives.

Children in families with multiple problems

Dr. Jana Knot-Dickscheit (University of Groningen)

Invited Symposium: Children in families with multiple problems
Chair: Dr. Jana Knot-Dickscheit

Families with multiple problems deal with an accumulation of interrelated problems that are both socio-economic and psycho-social in nature. The problems within the families are often chronic and transgenerational. The situation of children in these families is of particular concern. They face increased risks of adverse child experiences, among others maltreatment and child abuse. These Children are often struggling – even after having received targeted childcare – with social, emotional and psychological problems. That problems keep on persisting in these families and for their children can linked to (1) the design of the care systems and interventions, to (2) the marginal position that is children themselves are often having in the care processes and (3) a lack of knowledge and skills of care workers to allow children and the family system to participate in a meaningful way.

In our symposium, we will therefore focus on the perspective of children who are growing up in families with multiple problems. In the first contribution by Jana Knot-Dickscheit and Tim Tausendfreund the general historical and international comparative perspective are outlined to provide a framework for the following points of discussion. Doris Bühler-Niederberger and Lars Alberth are highlighting the power of a care narrative titled “overburdened mother”, that illustrates how the application of different logics by professionals, adults, or children as victim, shapes care processes. Sabine Andresen then focuses on the child by presenting latest findings of the scope and impact of child sexual abuse in Germany. Stories about childhood and family of today’s adults who have been abused in their childhood and the implications of child sexual abuse for the child will be discussed. Arjen van Assen is highlighting the intervention Child and Youth Coaching (CYC). CYC is offered to children in families with multiple problems. Parallel to this, the whole family receives a form of family intervention. Care elements of CYC and contrasting professional and child perspectives will be presented. In the last contribution, Loraine Visscher focuses on which practice and program elements are provided within interventions for children in and families with multiple problems.

Dr. J. (Jana) Knot-Dickscheit (University of Groningen, Department of Child and family Welfare; j.knot-dickscheit@rug.nl) and Dr. T. (Tim) Tausendfreund (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Social Work, Institute of Childhood, Youth and Family).

Title: Children in families with multiple problems: historical and future perspectives.

Prof. Dr. Doris Bühler-Niederberger (Bergische Universität Wuppertal; buehler@uni-wuppertal.de) and Prof. Dr. Lars Alberth (Leuphana Universität Lüneburg).

Title: “Multi problem families”, “overburdened mothers”, and where is the child? Physical violence and symbolic power of definition

Prof. Dr. Sabine Andresen (Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main; S.Andresen@em.uni-frankfurt.de). Title: Revisiting the Child from Back Then. Child Sexual Abuse in Families and Systematic Perspectives on Vulnerability.

Arjen van Assen, PhD (University of Groningen; a.g.van.assen@rug.nl), & Dr. Jana Knot-Dickscheit, Dr. Wendy Post (University of Groningen), & Prof. Dr. Hans Grietens (KU Leuven).

Title: Care elements of child-centered care in complex care settings: contrasting professional and child perspectives

Loraine Visscher, PhD (University Medical Center Groningen; l.visscher@umcg.nl), & Dr. K.E. Evenboer (University Medical Center Groningen; Prof. Dr. R.H.J. Scholte (Radboud University Nijmegen), Dr. J. Knot-Dickscheit (University of Groningen), Prof. Dr. T.A. Yperen (Dutch Youth Institution/University of Groningen), Dr. D.E.M.C.

Jansen, & Prof. Dr. S.A. Reijneveld (University Medical Center Groningen).
Title: Elucidating care for families with multiple problems: self-registered elements of practitioners.
Moderator: Prof. Dr. John Devaney (University of Edinbuurgh; J.Devaney@ed.ac.uk)

Children in families with multiple problems - Care elements of child-centred care in complex care settings: contrasting professional and child perspectives

Mr. Arjen Van Assen (Univeristy of Groningen), Dr. Jana Knot-Dickscheit (University of Groningen), Dr. Wendy Post (University of Groningen), Prof. Hans Grietens (KU Leuven)

Context:Families experiencing complex and multiple problems are characterized by an accumulation of interrelated and longstanding problems across different areas of life. Children growing up in these families are at risk of developing a wide array of problems. Several studies have indicated that one of the issues in providing suitable support for these families is the lack of child-focused interventions. To provide suitable care for children growing up in families experiencing complex and multiple problems, recently a child-centred intervention – Child and Youth Coaching (CYC) – has been developed in the Netherlands. ***Objectives:***The aim of this study was to identify the programme elements of the CYC intervention and to assess treatment standards (fidelity) as well as differences in care provision across cases (flexibility). From the analysis of these care elements central themes related to child-centred care provision were identified. ***Method:***A qualitative research design with multiple sources was used. The data consisted of the programme manual of CYC, 6 interviews with care professionals, 12 interviews with children, 382 care reports from 6 cases, and 43 intake forms. The study design consisted of five phases. In *phase 1*programme elements were identified from the programme manual. In *phase 2*hybrid coding was used to identify programme elements from a care worker perspective (using interviews with care professionals, intakes and care reports). Programme elements identified from the programme manual were coded deductively using the codebook developed in phase one. Additional programme elements were coded using inductive coding. In *phase 3*we identified to which extent programme elements identified from practice adhered to the programme manual (fidelity); to what extent programme elements varied across cases (flexibility); and which factors and considerations played a role in care provision (considerations). In *phase 4* we compared the aspects related to fidelity, flexibility, and considerations in care provision identified in phase three across programme elements. This allowed for the identification of central themes related to care provision for children growing up in families experiencing complex and multiple problems from the professional's perspective. In *phase*5 we analysed the interviews with children using inductive thematic analysis to identify central themes related to care provision from the children's perspective and compared these to the care professional perspective. **Results:**Several themes were distinguished that were similar across cases such as: The need for emphasizing a trusting relation, an emphasis on gathering information and psychoeducation, an emphasis on child advocacy and child perspective. With regard to flexibility between cases several themes were identified such as the way children participated in determining care goals and activities; phasing of activities through the care process; and care coordination and referral to specialist services. Differences in shaping the care process and child participation were mainly due to children's characteristics and ability to actively participate in services and the skills of coaches to engage children and adapt services to their needs. The presentation will elaborate on the barriers and opportunities related to successfully engaging children in child-centred care. **Conclusion:**Using the flexibility within fidelity framework we found that the CYC intervention was characterized by a child-centred approach with an emphasis on psycho-education and social skill building across cases. However, the way children participated in shaping care goals and activities varied considerably between cases. The child-centred approach of CYC was evaluated positively by both children and professionals, but several barriers towards meaningful participation of children in care were observed from both perspectives.

Children in families with multiple problems - Elucidating care for families with multiple problems: self-registered elements of practitioners

Ms. Loraine Visscher (University Medical Center Groningen; University of Groningen), Dr. Els Evenboer (University Medical Center Groningen; Windesheim University of Applied Sciences), Prof. Ron Scholte (Radboud University Nijmegen; Tilburg University; de Viersprong), Prof. Tom van Yperen (University of Groningen), Dr. Jana Knot-Dickscheit (University of Groningen), Dr. Danielle Jansen (University Medical Center Groningen; University of Groningen), Prof. Menno Reijneveld (University Medical Center Groningen; University of Groningen)

Introduction: Families with multiple problems (FMP) face a wide range of complex and intertwined problems in multiple life domains. Different interventions are developed to reduce these problems or consequences of these problems for FMP. These interventions are described in intervention manuals, but their content in practice often deviates from these guidelines. Knowledge on elements that are provided in practice is lacking. Due to this lack of knowledge, outcomes of interventions for FMP are hard to interpret (i.e. which provided elements have led to certain outcomes). One way to gain knowledge on the content and provision of these interventions is the use of the taxonomy of interventions for FMP (TIFMP). Using this taxonomy enables to systematically collect information on provided practice elements (i.e. distinct techniques used by practitioners) and program elements (i.e. aspects of intervention format) of interventions for FMP. Detailed knowledge on provided practice and program elements in practice may lead to hypotheses on the optimal content, sequence and intensity of interventions for FMP. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify which practice and program elements are provided within interventions for FMP, including the intensity, the method via which provided and to whom, per intervention phase (start-, care- and end phase).

Method: We selected eight interventions targeting FMP that are commonly used in the Netherlands and have been shown to yield at least moderate effect sizes: Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), Intensive Family Treatment (IFT), Families First (FF), Family Central (FC), Parent Management Training Oregon (PMTO), Triple P 4-5 and 10 for the Future (10FF). Practitioners of 26 Dutch care organizations systematically registered information on practice and program elements, the intensity, manner of provision, and recipients by means of the TIFMP. The TIFMP consisted of eight main categories comprising 53 practice elements (e.g. working on communication) and one category comprising six program elements (e.g. duration and intensity of the intervention).

Results: Within 474 care trajectories we found that practice elements were mainly provided within main categories ‘assessment of problems’, ‘planning and evaluation’ ‘working on change’, ‘learning parenting skills’ and ‘maintaining the practitioner-client collaboration’. Elements regarding the ‘activation of the social network’ and ‘helping with concrete needs’ were least often provided (in less than 48%-77% of the families). Elements were provided mainly through psycho-education (25%-33%) and instruction (21%-24%). Elements provided to FMP mainly focused on parents (53%-62%) and less on children (26%-32%). Program elements hardly changed between phases of the intervention, although the number of visits decreased (from an average of six visits a month during the starting phase to four visits during the end phase).

Conclusion: The use of the TIFMP to systematically record the content of care in practice gives detailed insight into the provision of elements and provides a more detailed way to study the effectiveness of interventions. Our results suggest a need for a more detailed investigation of ways in which the social network may be involved and strengthened within interventions for FMP. Moreover, since elements provided to FMP are mainly focused on parents, more emphasis should be placed towards the involvement of children. Lastly, the high-use of psycho-education deserves further attention since FMP may benefit more from practical help.

Children in families with multiple problems: historical and future perspectives

Dr. Jana Knot-Dickscheit (University of Groningen), Dr. Tim Tausendfreund (ZHAW)

There are children whose well-being and life perspectives we should be particularly concerned about. These are children growing up in families with multiple problems. In the long term, the accumulation of problems in the environment they grow up in increases the likelihood of adverse childhood experiences as well as of serious developmental and social problems. Children growing up in families with multiple problems are therefore also a—or perhaps even the—primary target group of child protection and childcare.

All the more astonishing is the fact that we know little about them so far. What we know from research indicates that the persistence of the parenting problems is on the one hand related to characteristics of the family and on the other hand to characteristics of the childcare system. Both, the childcare system as well as the perception of what constitutes normal or problematic family environments have been subject to change over time. To learn from historical and international comparative perspective about (1) who is identified as belonging to this target group, (2) what is perceived as problematic and (3) how interventions for these families are characterized, can help to identify future direction in addressing the needs of this target group more adequately.

Method

The paper presented is an integrative literature review in which several historical and theoretical articles have been synthesized to identify advances as well as gaps and inconsistencies in the body of knowledge. Furthermore, findings are illustrated drawing from a wide range of original empirical studies and meta-analyses.

Results

Families with multiple problems are not a new phenomenon. The attention they have received because they could not escape from dire social situations or solve (inter)related family problems has for centuries led to initiatives to bring about change in these families, such as welfare for the poor, social housing and childcare. However, we have to conclude that these initiatives do not, or only with great difficulty, led to changes for most of these families. In our paper we compare three different national historical contexts, from the Netherlands, from Germany and from the United Kingdom.

From a historical perspective two periods can be distinguished in the Netherlands: (1) from 1820–1950/60 and (2) the new problem configuration of the ‘problem family’. In the first period, these were families who, in connection with their poor life situation and unanswered needs, raised fears of social disorder. ‘Poor families’, ‘anti-social families’, ‘socially unacceptable families’ and ‘unsociable families’ were all terms used as descriptive. Families were perceived as a social entity, that could be isolated from society and morally educated in so-called colonies. Labor and education were seen as main source for improvements. The subsequent period was characterized by a new problem figuration, that of the ‘problem family’ and later ‘multi-problem family’. Families were seen as problems of individual family members, as a problem for their social surroundings and a problem for the care system itself. Questions on the results of care and its cost effectiveness did arise, due to the inability to find long-term solutions and revolving door effects or recurring crisis interventions. In the presentation we connect, compare and contrast these findings to develops in Germany and the UK.

Conclusion

There will always be children that need extra care due the multitude of problems the families face they grow up in. Support for these families requires support in multiple domains of life and coordinated professional collaborations. More attention and direct care are needed for children in these families opposed to a high emphasis on parental support as change mediator. Care arrangements should be individually designed, flexible and aimed at long-term stabilization.

Children in Family Intervention - Perceptions of change resulting from a positive parenting programme through the voice of children

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Introduction. Current research has evidenced that children's and parents' participation is a catalyst for the return home of their children. It helps them to understand better the reasons for the separation and to involve in their process for successful family reunification. In this way, the socio-educational program 'Walking family (Caminar en Familia)' (Balsells, et al., 2015) take on a child-rights based approach into its purpose of promoting specific parenting skills in a process of fostering and reunification.

Foster care measures are carried out with the objective of protecting children. These involve the beginning of an intensely emotional process for the whole family (children and parents). Different researches report that the lack of information (the reasons for the separation, information about the measure adopted, or information about the future changes in children's lives) influences the adjustment of children to the measure and their attitude toward the changes they and their parents will have to do. The attitude of families regarding protective measures is essential to advancing through processes of foster care and reunification. Thus, it is necessary to take into account their perceptions, their views, and their voices and to involve them in all the reunification process.

Research shows that maintain the relationships between parents and their children in foster care help to the family reunification process. On the one hand, children feel loved by their parents. On the other hand, parents feel involved by their children to change. In this case, it is necessary to give strategies to improve the quality of the visits and contacts between the family members.

Objective. The aim of this communication is to present the perceptions of changes in parents and their children who are in the foster care system after completing the Walking Family program. Specifically, we would like to emphasize the voice of children and how they perceive the changes that the whole family has done.

Method. It is presented a qualitative study with a comprehensive descriptive purpose. The participants in the Walking family program included 135 parents and 115 children. Information was collected through 26 focus groups. 10 of these groups were from children with 46 participants.

Results. Information through the child voices identified findings that suggest the need to be informed and consulted about their understanding of the situation. Also, the findings evidence that sometimes children and parents aren't in the same step of the process of family resilience and this needs to be changed. Another finding proposes changes in the quality of visits between parents and children. Finally, they propose changes in the role of professionals involved in the case.

Conclusions. The direct and active involvement of children in the Walking family program indicates the efficacy of the child rights-based approach because they become a driver of change for their parents.

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Children in kinship and non-kin foster care: a comparative study

Dr. Nuria Fuentes Peláez (University of Barcelona), Dr. Gemma Crous (University of Barcelona), Ms. Rosa Sitjes (University of Girona), Dr. Carme Montserrat (University of Girona)

Thematic relevance:

The consolidation of the kinship measures against the residential ones when a child is separated from his or her family is still a challenge in some countries such as Portugal, Italy, Israel or Spain, amongst others. Considering the Spanish context, kinship care is still more common than non-kinship care, and the percentage is similar to the residential care cases when the out of home family (OOHF) situation happens. This fact emphasises the importance of the kinship care for children who is in the protection system.

Background and purpose:

The well-being of the children in care should be the main concern of all the agents involved. The legal frame that gives priority to the kinship care against non-kinship care and the low availability of non-kinship caregivers, condition the decisions taken about the type of care. The advantages and weaknesses of the kinship caregivers are well documented; even they are not conclusive, sometimes. It is necessary to know about more than one perspective and to take into account the main carers of children, the caregivers, in order to improve decision-making that affects children's lives. The objective of this study is to describe the type of kinship and non-kinship care in Spain, and to evaluate the satisfaction of the caregivers in different domains.

Methods:

An important NGO in the field of family foster care requested the universities to carry out this study with a sample of 930 cases of out-of-home placements – 35.5% in non-kin care and 64.5% in kinship foster care; 61.9% were active placements and 38.1% were closed cases. We analysed a sample of caregivers (N=221) (34.8% non-kin caregivers and 65.2% kinship caregivers), and a sample of children (N=84) (29.8% in non-kin care and 70.2% in kinship care) aged between 8 and 17 years old, and equally distributed by gender.

Three type of questionnaires were used: one for the kinship caregivers and one for the non-kinship caregivers, with different questions for open and closed cases. For the analysis, the T-student test and the Chi-square test were used, as well as the Effect size for each test when the difference was statistically significant. In addition, a Two-step cluster was used to determine the existence of different types of caregivers depending on their personal characteristics and the evaluation done about the experience as caregivers.

Results:

The comparative analysis points out statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the kinship and non-kinship caregivers in relation to their characteristics, the future foresight, the relationship with the biological family, the communication with the child, the perception of covering the needs for the child, and the satisfaction with the evolution of the child. In general terms, kinship caregivers expressed greater optimism and a more positive view of the placement than non-kin caregivers. The results from the cluster confirm some ideas from other studies in relation with the existence of differences between the two types of care, and this result point out the importance of taking into account specific needs for each type of care.

Conclusions and implications:

The identification of some differential aspects between the two types of care contributes to identify elements to make decisions about what type of care is better for each child, and also what type of support is needed to strengthen the quality of the care ensuring its stability and avoiding breakdowns.

Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care: Their Feelings, Perceptions, and Concerns

Dr. Svetlana Yampolskaya (University of South Florida), Dr. Connie Walker (University of South Florida)

Each year about 400,000 children enter the foster care system in the U.S. (USDHHS, AFCARS, 2019). Placement in out-of-home care is associated with a great number of adverse outcomes. Studies indicate that compared to their peers in the general population, youth placed in out-of-home care are in worse mental and physical health, have higher levels of problem behavior, and are more likely to have substance abuse problems and criminal involvement (Anderson, 2011; Cheung, 2011; Gypen, 2017; Turney & Wildeman, 2016). Research also suggests than many youth who emerge from out-of-home care show stable, long-term positive behavioral adjustment, and that their externalizing and internalizing problems decrease over time (McWey, et al., 2010; Proctor et al., 2010). Although these studies are informative, they examined these children as a homogeneous group and did not account for children’s feelings and perceptions. However, it is important to examine what children think and feel about their surroundings including schools, their caregivers, and their foster care placements. It may also be of value to explore whether there are discrete groups of youth that have distinct perception and outcomes. Data were obtained from The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW II), the national study of child welfare involved families. The sample included 343 children 11 years of age or older placed in out-of-home care at baseline. Sample gender and ethnicity characteristics were: 52% female, 43% Caucasian, 43% African American, 25% Hispanic, and 14% Other. Latent class analysis was used to identify discrete groups of youth that varied in their perceptions and feelings. Three classes were identified: *Happy Youth*, *Sociable but Troubled*, and *Traumatized Unhappy.*

Most youth in the *Happy Youth* class (48%) enjoyed school, got along with teachers and students, and never felt alone. None reported feeling sad within the last two weeks, having suicidal ideation, or feeling that nothing was working for them. None reported feeling like crying, getting into fights, or having trouble sleeping, and 80% reported that they had fun in many things. They reported being minimally traumatized and the majority felt happy with their caregivers.

Most youth in the *Sociable but Troubled*class also reported getting along with teachers (70%), getting along with other students (87%), and having friends (71%). Eighty per cent reported never feeling lonely and 91% said that they felt a part of the family they stayed. However, 20% of these youth said that they felt sad on many occasions, 43% were not sure that things would work out for them, 24% admitted having suicidal thoughts, and only 54% said that they had fun in many things. These youth reported as being moderately traumatized and only 52% felt happy with their caregivers.

Youth in the *Traumatized Unhappy*class represent the most troubled youth in the sample. They reported as being highly traumatized, 43% felt sad all the time, 49% reported suicidal thoughts, and 42% felt like crying on many days. These youths did not enjoy school; 40% said that they did not get along with either teachers or other students and 55% said that they often felt lonely. Only 38% said that they felt good with their caregivers, whereas 27% reported feeling very unhappy with their caregivers.

When examined on indices of illegal activity, compared to *Happy Youth, Traumatized Unhappy*class were 93% more likely to be involved in delinquency activities, and almost 17 times more likely to use illegal substances (OR = 16.8). Compared to*Happy Youth, Sociable but Troubled* class was 60% more likely to be involved in delinquency activities and almost 5 times (OR = 4.8) to use substances. Implications of these findings will be discussed.

Children´s perspective on parental maltreatment: a study of children’s episodic memory and episodic foresight

Ms. Sanmya Salomao (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto), Prof. Orlanda Cruz (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto), Dr. Ana Catarina Canario (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto)

Child maltreatment and neglect involves a wide range of parental practices that result in harm or potential harm to child welfare, including not caring for, protecting or attending to children´s psychological needs. In families at risk for child maltreatment and neglect, parental practices tend to include coercive disciplinary strategies, threats, unpredictable reactions and laxness, with high levels of stress for parents and children. Such patterns may prevent children from developing a secure sense of self, preclude children from learning to interpret and anticipate their parent’s reactions in relation to their own behaviours, and from internalizing the ground rules. Families at risk for child maltreatment and neglect also face problems in everyday activities at planning and keeping a daily or weekly routine. We hypothesize that such unstable and unpredictable environment would hinder child development in time reasoning, event ordering and especially in their ability to project themselves mentally into the future or back in time. We are interested on the cognitive processes of episodic memory and episodic foresight, which enable mental travel time towards specific and self-involving events. Episodic memory relates to autonoetic awareness allowing the person to retrieve past events from specific moments in subjective time (Tulving, 2005). Episodic foresight, by projecting the self into the future, provides a pre-experience of events in a way the person can anticipate his own thoughts, feelings and needs yet to come (Atance & Mahy, 2016; Suddendorf, 2017). Together, episodic memory and episodic foresight display the child’s potential to make integrated relations among past, present and future events, enhancing a coherent sense of self through time.

The purpose of this research is to comprehend the child´s perspective on parental maltreatment, analysing children´s narratives about parental practices, family routine events and parent-child interactions, exploring possible effects of parental maltreatment on child´s time reasoning, episodic memory and episodic foresight. We analysed event ordering skills, episodic foresight and episodic memory in a sample of 65 children aged 6 to 12 years old . The families, followed by the protective services, integrate a larger study, aimed at assessing the effectiveness of a parenting intervention.

Measures included a structured interview, adapted from Coughlin, Lyons and Ghetti (2014), to capture, the family routines and the child narrative about parent-child interaction related to parental strategies displayed in: joint activities, management of misbehaviour and encouraging child good behaviour; as well as the Picture Book Trip task (Atance & Meltzoff, 2005), a behavioural task to assess episodic foresight.

Results reveal that the experience of maltreatment and neglect are associated with children´s lower levels of episodic content in their narratives. Effects on the children’s ability to project themselves into the future were also observed, as they tend to become more restricted to the present, making it difficult to go beyond immediate constraints.

The present study offers an important contribution of the child´s perspective, revealing the effects of parental maltreatment and neglect on time reasoning. These data can also be useful in further analysis of the effectiveness of the parenting intervention program as a tool to prevent child maltreatment and neglect and to promote positive parenting practices, considering the child´s perspective.

Children‘s voices heard or hurt? Participation in decision-making processes (chair: Thalheim) - The voice of the child in assessments of risk: Do children from families on social assistance get less attention?

Prof. David Lätsch (Zurich Un), Ms. Julia Quehenberger (ZHAW)

Chair/contact: Vinzenz Thalheim

Context: In child protection cases, findings indicate that children may benefit from inclusion in the decision-making process in many ways. In spite of this evidence, there seems to be a persistent gap between the normative claim to participation of children and the actual implementation of participatory processes. Research has begun to explore the factors that drive case workers’ tendencies to create opportunities of participation for children. However, a theoretical model of such prerequisites is lacking. In the present paper, we propose that the tendency of a professional to have a child participate in decision-making will depend on i) the *perceived participatory competence* of the child, ii) the *perceived affectedness* of the child by the problem at hand, and iii) the *perceived information potential* of the child. We further assume that the perceived participatory competence of the child will not only depend on the child’s individual characteristics (such as age or developmental status), but in a kind of spill-over effect will be affected by the participatory competence that is ascribed to the family unit as a whole. One factor that has been shown to decrease the participatory opportunities for families in child and youth welfare is family poverty. To test this last facet of the model, we hypothesize that children from families who are on social assistance will be given less opportunity to participate in decision-making as compared to their peers.

Method: Data were collected from six child protective agencies in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Cases were formal assessments of possible child endangerment. Case files from a one-year period were randomly selected. Characteristics on multiple levels (case, caregivers and children, social workers, decisional outcomes) were coded according to a predefined system. In a binary approach, child participation was coded as present when the views of the child on the case were explicitly mentioned and addressed in the case report submitted to the child protection authority. Case files from children under the age of four were excluded. The analysis is based on data on 124 children (53.2 % girls).

Results: The inclusion of the voice of the child in the report was found in 54.8 % of cases. The likelihood of participation increased strongly with the age of the child. Case workers were much less likely to take children’s views into account when the family was on social assistance (OR=0.21, p<0.01), even when controlling for plausible confounders in a multilevel model.

Conclusions: Our study did not falsify our hypothesis. Independent of our model, the evidence points to something peculiar about families receiving social assistance that distracts social workers’ attention away from the perspective of the child and/or that makes the inclusion of this perspective seem less advisable. We will consider possible explanations and discuss implications for practice.

Children‘s voices heard or hurt? Participation in decision-making processes - Children’s participation and human flourishing

Dr. Vinzenz Thalheim (University of Kassel), Prof. Mark Schrödter (University of Kassel)

chair/contact person of joint proposal: Vinzenz Thalheim

Objective

Social Work has always to consider children‘s perspectives in order to minimize arbitrariness and improve human flourishing. Thus, children’s participation is especially important for residential care settings that do have mayor impact on the lifes of its residents. There are many opportunities associated with participative approaches such as enhancing children’s autonomy, subjectivizing children as experts of their own lifes and fulfilling inclusive standards of democratic societies. But needless to say, there are always two sides of the same coin. Ethically spoken, children’s perspectives, opinions and wishes aren’t necessarily an expression of their best interest in terms of safekeeping or everyday-life-choices such as doing seductive activities like eating fast-food or watching TV rather than doing flourishing activities like doing sports or spending time in nature. This leads to the challenging question: How should children voices be heard (Brighouse 2003)? Which level on the ladder of participation (Arnstein 1969) should professionals provide for children? And how should children be empowered to share their own perspectives?

Despite the importance of children’s participation there is a lack of studies examining interactions of decision-making processes between children and social workers in residential care settings.

Method

In our ethnographical research project we explored 4 different residential care homes in Germany with the focus on how children participate in creating their everyday life. Therefore, the research was focused on situations of decision-making processes e.g. planning holiday activities or installing wifi in the residential care facility. Data is based on recorded interactions between residents and professionals as well as on notes from participant observations. Analysis was done with Grounded Theory (Corbin/Strauss 2015) and objective Hermeneutics (Oevermann et al. 1987).

Results

Spoken in terms of Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation our findings did not show structures of equal decision-making processes between residents and social workers. Residents get opportunities for creating their own activities but just within the given daily schedule. This schedule is hardly negotiable. In that sense children’s voices were not be considered authoritative but consultative in decision-making processes. The study’s findings also point out that social worker’s voices and perspectives are constantly been heard by residents whereas resident’s voices are not always been heard by social workers. This we refer to as ‘hurt voices’ of the residents.

Conclusion

Social Workers have ultimate responsibility for children in residential care and have therefore the moral responsibility for making decisions in their best interests. Thus, we need to discuss ethical issues of how to represent children’s interest best in order to let them flourish. This could not simply be accomplished by giving children’s voices authoritative status all the time. Rather, our study shows, that it seems logically and ethically coherent to give children authoritative or consultative voices in different situations, so that they are heard but not hurt.

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Children‘s voices heard or hurt? Participation in decision-making processes – Children’s Participation in child protection processes. A comparison between USA and Germany

Ms. Katharina Freres (University of Koblenz-Landau), Prof. Pascal Bastian (University of Koblenz-Landau)

Objectives

This presentation discusses decision-making in child protection and compares ethnographic data between Germany and USA. It focuses on the challenges of children‘s participation.

Article 12 in UNCRC regulates the right of children and young people to participate in decisions affecting their lives. This also applies to decisions concerning the protection of children: children should have the opportunity to be heard in all judicial and administrative proceedings and their views must be taken into account.

Studies show that there are barriers to children‘s participation. For example, professionals argue that children‘s participation can put the child at risk (Ferguson, 2017) or that statements made out of loyalty to parents cannot be considered authentic anyway (van Bijleveld et al., 2015). Other research states that children‘s participation is required by the profession, but in fact the Children‘s participation is perfunctory rather than an important aspect of the process (Toros et al., 2018).

Method

We will present and compare data from two ethnographical studies, which were gained during several field visit in child welfare services in Germany and the USA. The field visits focused on social workers’ direct interactions with clients in home visits, group decision-making processes between social workers and families, hotline service, staff meetings and court hearings. By participating in the daily life of the Child Welfare Service, several social workers and their supervisors have been shadowed. We used daily field notes to document observations with the intention to experience how professional social workers come to their decisions and how children and parents are heard, involved and participated in this decision-making process.

Results

The data show a very different practice of participation in the two countries. In Germany the Youth Welfare Service allows very little possibilities of participation for parents or children. These findings are complementary to the results of other studies (Wolff et al.). Very often the children are not even directly interviewed and the parents mainly serve as informants. Nevertheless, the actual decision is based on a series of various practical tests that the professionals implicitly use when investigating child protection cases. In the US cases, on the other hand, a strictly formalized involvement of the clients is evident. The children are interviewed by exclusion of their parents. This formal practice seems to use the children less as participants but rather as principal witnesses whose statements are intended to testify to events that have already been determined or suspected in advance.

Conclusions

The comparison of the results in both countries shows the ambivalence and challenges of participation in child protection. In both countries, the children’s perspective is not included in the idea of the UNCRC. At the same time, it is possible to discuss how, from a normative point of view (Brighouse, 2003), an appropriate form of participation by children can be achieved in such a difficult field, where control and risk orientation is in a paradoxical relationship to participatory structures.

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Children's agency in residential child care: Theoretical challenges and empirical potentials

Prof. Florian Eßer (University of Osnabrück)

The aim of the presentation is to set the ground for the Invited Symposium "Children and agency". First I will refer to the long tradition as well as to contemporary academic debates of the concept of children's agency within Childhood Studies. Second I will discuss the potentials and pitfalls of deploying an agency perspective to the field of residential child care. Drawing on my own and others theoretical and empirical work I will propose a relational concept of agency which includes bodies, materiality and spaces in residential child care. This opposes a prevailing naturalistic and liberal understanding of agency as a general human property which also dominates the academic debate in Social Work and residential child care. Many of the studies within the field focus on face-to-face interactions between individual professionals and children and come to rather critical and disillusioning results stating that children's voices often do not have any effect in practice or are too quickly transformed into an institutional logic. But studies which are based on a relational understanding are also able to show that children's agency does not just depend on individual professionals' awareness but is much more networked, "messy" and produced in several different (intergenerational) relations. In particular a relational perspective may overcome a certain dichotomy between agency and vulnerability which often dominates our view of children and young people in care. Instead agency and vulnerability are both effects of relations and networks.

These assumptions will further be explored by an example of my own empirical work in the field of residential child care. On the basis of participant observation, it will be shown how care workers influence the agency and vulnerability of children and young people by bringing their own bodies into their relationships with them. Based on a relational understanding it will be elaborated on how tender and restraining forms of touch form part of care workers' professional repertoire of actions. The analysis of various instances of touch in terms of sociology of the body shows how staff members can help to shape children and young people's agency with their own bodies.

Children's participation in child protection proceedings: Do you hear me?

Ms. Aline Schoch (School of Social Work, University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland FHNW), Dr. Gaëlle Aeby (University of Geneva)

Participation of children and youth in child protection is widely discussed and has also been significantly enhanced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) since 1989. In Switzerland, the Child and Adult Protection Authority (CAPA) is the decision-making body in cases of suspected child endangerment. The CAPA is assigned to assess the wellbeing of the child as well as the family situation; to hear parents and their children; and to take decisions on child protection measures, which may have a life-changing impact on the persons concerned. The CAPA's main task is to ensure children's protection and wellbeing but is often met with fear by families. The 'right to be heard' anchored in international and Swiss national law sets participation of the concerned persons as an overarching goal. Participation does not only imply the right of getting information, but also to express oneself, and to have a voice in the decision-making process. In child protection proceedings, full participation can be hard to put into practice, especially in a context where parents' desires and their children's interests may conflict.

Based on an interdisciplinary research project, we investigate how children and youth understand, experience, and respond to what happens to them during child protection proceedings. This presentation will offer first results based on qualitative interviews with parents and their children in four different cantons in the German-speaking and in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. The qualitative interviews are complemented with participant observations of hearings conducted at four different CAPAs. This allows contrasting the subjective perspective of our participants with a structurally informed perspective.

Our main aim is to explore how children and youth report on their encounter with CAPA: What do they understand from the whole proceeding? Do they feel they have been heard? To which extent do they manage to influence the decision? Results will discuss the challenges it raises for practitioners, but also for a better general understanding of children's and youth's participation. Finally, the presentation will also put a focus on aspects of participation, integrity, and autonomy of children and youth in child protection proceedings.

Children's perspectives in complex situations: Residential care - Case studies from Brazil and Thailand

Mr. André Cardozo Sarli (University of Geneva), Prof. Daniel Pascal Stoecklin (University of Geneva), Mr. Quentin Fayet (University of Geneva)

Childhood and children's perspectives are two topics that surprisingly did not walk together until relatively recent times in several areas and disciplines. The movement that brought light to the concepts of child participation and child agency took stronger shapes in the 80s and 90s, with the advent of the UNCRC, and in sociology, with the new paradigm of the sociology of childhood (James & Prout 1990). Child agency has been a key topic of enquiry for the discipline, and in practice, participation is increasingly taking its promised part as one of the pillars of children's rights. However, for marginalized children such as Children in Street Situations (CSS) (Lucchini & Stoecklin 2019), participation is mediated by a complex set of variables, among which we identified the norm of individual responsibility and the underlying modes of action that characterize intervention and can be considered regimes of truth (Foucault 1991).

In 2017, the UNCRC has addressed the issue and published an authoritative interpretation, the General Comment 21 on Street Children, which brings extensive recommendations in terms of respecting the child perspective. On the onset of this guidance and considering the plethora of difficulties and obstacles children in street situations face (Stoecklin 2018), this paper focuses on the inclusion and interpretation of participative rights and the agency of those marginalized children in residential care.

In order to understand this complex process and its impact on the implementation of children's rights in different contexts, the paper focuses on the participatory capability of CSS in two countries with very different institutional arrangements, namely Brazil and Thailand. Our goal is to examine the relationship between different types of care centers and the forms of participation of CSS in these facilities. By doing so, we will highlight the process of "translations" of children's rights (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013) into effective participatory capability for CSS. The paper focuses on the theoretical background and the first findings collected in the year of 2019, analyzed along the capability approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000, 2011), the structuration theory (Giddens, 1979, 1984) and the actor's system (Stoecklin, 2013). The "agency within structure" approach might be considerably enriched by this perspective about "the structure of agency".

The methodology used is ethnographic observations, semi-directed interviews with children and caretakers, and desk reviews, with focus on the institutional arrangements in the micro, meso and macro levels and their combined effects on intervention regarding marginalized children, especially the ones in street situations.

Initial results point that participation for CSS in care centers in Brazil and Thailand involve negotiations that draw from the street's experiences and in some cases the streets rules, on one angle, the structure and policies of the care center, on another angle, and the overarching concepts and application of rights coming from above. This creates a complex reality where participation may take unusual and even borderline but tolerated forms, such as the children evading the facility or being in flagrant violation of internal rules of conduct. For this we will use the concept of the capability approach, which is extremely useful to analyze in settings that heavily depend on resources and are marked by scarcity, such as social work and in a more pronounced way, in countries facing budget and development issues - Brazil and Thailand.

The expected contribution is to (i) enrich the sociological perspective of children participation and child agency, (ii) contribute to the capability approach with a case study reflecting very complex situations, and (iii) collecting and putting into evidence good practices of child participation, especially for marginalized children navigating between the streets and care centers.

Children's perspectives on living and growing up "as at home as possible" - A participatory research with children living in residential care.

Dr. Janneke Peelen (HAN University of Applied Sciences), Dr. Marion van Hattum (HAN University of Applied Sciences), Ms. Marieke Saedt (HAN University of Applied Sciences), Ms. Marjolein van der Tas (HAN University of Applied Sciences), Mr. Marcel Quanjel (entrea lindenhout), Mrs. Madeleine Theunissen (entrea lindenhout), Mrs. Martine van der Burgt (entrea lindenhout)

*Children belong at home, and if not possible, as at home as possible,*according to the vision of 'entrea lindenhout', a regional child care institution in the Netherlands.

This paper reports on a study commissioned by this institution on the perspectives of children in residential care on living and growing up as at home as possible. The research was undertaken by children who live in a residential care home, staff and management, students of the bachelor pedagogy and senior researchers.

The research goal was to evaluate a transition towards residential care with a stronger link to the family situation of children in care. The transformation consisted of two major components. First a transformation of the living facilities including smaller groups, smaller teams, more family-style group care, and as few transfers between different care homes as possible. Secondly, a transformation of the pedagogical climate with a strong focus on collaboration with the child's (family) network during placement at one of the residential care homes.

Our central questions for this evaluation were:

- What are the perspectives of children in residential care on living and growing up as at home as possible?
- How can the perspectives of children on living and growing up as at home as possible be translated to the organization of residential care?

The research started from a rationale that acknowledges the importance of children's perspectives and voices and valuing the original contribution that child-researchers can make to our understanding of children's lives. Therefore, during the whole research project we worked with a research group consisting of children living in a residential care home, whose input shaped the research plan and analyses, and who participated in the translation of research questions into actions for improvement.

On the one hand this paper reports on the substantive output of our research, including children's perspectives on "living and growing up as at home as possible" and the translation of these perspectives in the organization of residential care. On the other hand, from a processual perspective it reports on the merits and areas of concern when giving children a central voice in research and evaluation of quality in care.

To underscore our inclusive approach in this research project the paper will be (partly) presented by a representative delegation of the research group, including a child researcher and manager of the child care institution.

Children’s rights and parents’ rights: Popular attitudes about balanced decision making

Prof. Jill D Berrick (UC Berkeley), Prof. Marit Skivenes (University of Bergen), Dr. Joe Roscoe (University of California, Berkeley)

*Introduction:*The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that children are rights-bearing individuals, whose fundamental rights are equal to those of adults. All countries have ratified the Convention except for the U.S. Many countries have also included children in their national constitutional frame, though the U.S. has not. Although the concept of children’s rights may have currency for some policy makers, and for professionals working in the field of child protection, the concept of children’s rights may not be widely understood among the lay public.

*Objectives:*This study examines the lay population’s attitudes about the balance between children’s rights and parents’ rights in the context of child protection. Examining public attitudes in two countries with very different policy orientations with regard to children’s rights and child protection systems, we seek to determine whether lay attitudes are reflective of a country’s policy frame, or whether there is discontinuity between lay views and policy orientations.

*Methods:*This study used an experimental survey to examine these questions. The sample included respondents from Norway (n= 1,031) and the U.S. (California) (n= 1,010). Public opinion research firms in Norway (ResponsAnalyze) and in California (YouGov) were engaged to collect the data. A survey vignette was used to assess laypersons’ views about children’s rights and parents’ rights in the context of child welfare. The vignette characterized a vulnerable family with implications for child maltreatment. The child was characterized as vulnerable due to age (i.e., an infant) and condition (i.e., born addicted to drugs due to serious parental drug use). One sentence in the vignette was manipulated to characterize severity of risk conceptualized as parental cooperation, insight, and responsibility. Respondents were randomly assigned a vignette characterized as low, medium, or high risk, resulting in 666 respondents in each treatment condition. Respondents’ attitudes about the balance between children’s rights and parents’ rights were assessed with three statements that served to measure the following three concepts: (1) privileged parental rights; (2) balanced rights; or (3) privileged children’s rights.

*Results:*An examination of data shows that the average score across countries and across risk profiles indicates that respondents are somewhat more inclined to give credence to children’s rights than to parents’ rights under conditions of risk. We did not find that respondents’ views about children’s rights or parents’ rights changed in relation to the severity of risk to the child. Respondents from the U.S. were more likely to privilege parental rights over children’s rights.

*Conclusion:*This study cannot determine whether the public is guided by public policy, or whether public policy serves as a lever to shift public opinion. Nevertheless, the differences we see in approach to child protection between the two countries are indicative of underlying cultural conditions to which child protection staff must respond.

Children's understandings and experiences of violence, their views on what and who can help: Findings from a 6 nation, EU funded project called Participation for Protection.

Dr. Karen Winter (Queens University Belfast)

Aims and Objectives: 'Participation for Protection' (P4P) is a European Commission funded project aimed at enhancing child-centred approaches and rights-based supports and treatments for children and young people who experience violence, and for those who work with them to better understand their needs. The project included partners from Austria; Belgium; Germany; the Republic of Ireland; Romania; and the UK. After exploring the findings, this paper will introduce the audience to the on-line training materials designed with children for adults to increase their awareness and enhance their practice with children who have experienced various forms of violence.

Methods: Consultations took place with over 1300 children and young people, aged 8-18 years, across the partner countries regarding their views on what constitutes harm, what helps in terms of disclosure and what makes for good service responses. Consultations involved children in schools, and specific groups at risk of, or already experiencing violence, including: children in care; children in detention/ in conflict with the law; Roma or Traveller children; children living in high conflict communities; child migrants and refugees; children with experience of domestic violence; and children who identify as LGBTQ+.

Key findings: In examining children's understandings and experiences of violence it was clear that children had been exposed to varying forms of violence and that their approach to experiencing violence was context and culturally specific. It was also clear that the help most valued and most difficult to secure, was in one-to-one meaningful relationships with professionals and family members. This was in stark contrast with the anticipated finding that web based resources would be the most useful source of support for children. Barriers for both children and adult professionals in establishing meaningful, supportive relationships were explored. Children's own views were central to the design of the training resources for adults which comprise four modules each with 3 tasks to complete. Areas covered include understanding children's' own perspectives and experiences of violence; children's help seeking behaviour; children's rights and violence; services and supports. The aim of the training resources is to secure more informed, effective child centred practice in this area.

Keywords: children's experiences and understandings of violence; children's help seeking behaviour; children's rights and violence; services and supports

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Children's understandings of vulnerability and well-being – a global perspective on qualitative research(methods/-findings)

Dr. Marion Pomey (ZHAW), Ms. Carina Pohl (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family)

The symposium is dedicated to children's perspectives on vulnerability and well-being. All people are vulnerable, of any age. Vulnerability arises from people being dependent on one another; being at one another's mercy (Butler, 2016). This is a case of interpersonal relations being a breeding ground for vulnerability. Thus vulnerability is a basic human condition; part of being human, and does not necessarily also imply a lack of agency (cf. Andresen, 2014; Janssen, 2018). In our understanding, vulnerability can take two forms: an ontological one and one produced via (societal) norms. So everybody is vulnerable but some are more vulnerable as others, e.g. children. Children are especially vulnerable, because of «Size and Strengh» , «Lack of Knowledge, Experience, and Self-Control», «Weak Norms and Sanctions Against Victimization» und «Lack of Choice over Associates» (Finkelhor, 2008). In the context of social work the issue is intensifying because often the children experienced biographical vulnerability and also they experience different care-relationships in which not only the generational order but also the relationships with professionals reinforces the asymmetry and the power imbalance. Furthermore, recent empirical studies show that children and juveniles in care systems again experience violation of the boundaries and (sexualized) violence (cf. Bombach et al., 2018; Commissie Samson, 2012; Pomey, 2017; Rau et al., 2019; Wolff, 2015). This leads us to the question of how children assess and understand their own vulnerability and how the social work and social politics can respond to it. Another question is what researchers are allowed to ask children and what children are able to talk about. That is why we asked Sabine Andresen (Goethe University Frankfurt, DE) to present her empirical research results because she has proven research experience with children, including on difficult topics such as sexual abuse in institutions. She is going to present her empirical research towards children's experiences with sexualized violence in residential care and research methods how to ask children about it.

On the other hand we are interested in the children's perspective of well-being, esp. in a global perspective. Child well-being is multi-dimensional and normative concept and often separated into objective and subjective well-being (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Ecarius et al., 2017; Fattore et al., 2019; Hunner-Kreisel & März, 2019). At the moment a multi-national qualitative study (cuwb.org) take place in more than 20 countries all over the world in almost every continent to ask children about their subjective well-being. In this research, novel methods are used, e.g. narrative maps, participatory approaches, triangulation of different research approaches, and group discussions. Therefore we asked Christine Hunner-Kreisel/Stella März (University of Vechta, DE) to present their work on children's understandings of well-being and vulnerability.

We also invited Samuel Keller (Zurich Universities of Applied Sciences, CH) to discuss his methodological perspectives in the context of children's well-being (Keller, 2019). And Marion Pomey/Carina Pohl (Zurich Universities of Applied Sciences, CH) will present empirical methods and material from their studies concerning the topic of important relationships for children, (in-)security, vulnerability, agency and well-being in residential care.

We understand childhood vulnerability and well-being as relational phenomena which can be theorized but also need to be empirically filled. The aim is to outline a theoretical embedding and establish the link(s) between vulnerability and well-being. What do children in out-of-home placements say about what constitutes well-being for them? How do they become vulnerable from a child's perspective? And how do out-of-home children understand and experience this as they have biographically experienced vulnerability? Another question is how we, as researchers, deal with the generational order and power differentials in research situations. These are the questions we want to address in the symposium.

Children’s voice and perspective on independent foster care: a missed opportunity?

Mrs. Evelina Fridell Lif (Department of Social Work, Stockholm University)

Children’s participation and voice in child welfare decisions has been widely discussed but the perspective of the child as a consumer of marketized welfare services is a comparably new topic. In Sweden, independent foster care as provided through private companies or non-profit organisations (hereafter IFP) are used by approximately 90 % of municipal social welfare agencies. Interdependent foster care options are often marketed as a means to provide extra support for foster parents and sometimes also support or treatment for the children in care. Presently the methods and quality of this type of care is not well understood, nor is the social services intentions when employing such services. As a step towards understanding this form of care a survey was conducted.

To explore this, social services agencies responsible for foster care placements in all of Sweden’s 290 municipalities were surveyed about their use of IFP services. Respondents were asked about their view on when placements in independent foster care was appropriate and their perception of quality of the services. The open-ended questions were answered by 59 respectively 79 respondents who chose to give their view on the reasons for choosing IFP and the quality of care received.

Respondents in the foster care agencies mainly attributed choosing IFP to issues to place children that were thought of as hard to place or scarce resources for recruiting or supporting foster families in-house. In several cases choices were perceived to be made on account of children’s special needs such as impairments, allergies or protection from parents or relatives. One respondent argued that IFP were used when a child needed treatment as well as care in a different location. The quality of care was mainly described as equal to the in-house foster care services but with remarks of varying quality between providers. Quality was perceived as dependent on the specific IFP as some were considered more serious than others. One reoccurring comment was that IFP offered services of foster families of which the agency had previous knowledge of and had rejected as inadequate. No comments explicitly considered any involvement of children in choice of care provider, how the choice might impact a child or how the quality might be decided based on children’s voice.

These results indicate that the social service agencies may not explicitly consider children’s view or best interest in deciding on or in assessing the quality of care in employing independent foster care. This study highlights the need for further study of how children’s perspectives are included in social services employment and reviewing of IFP services.

In light of these findings, this presentation discusses the implications of the present situation and possibilities for inclusion of children’s voice and opportunity to influence in child welfare choices also in marketized care options. User influence in adjacent fields and Convention of Children’s right are drawn upon in the discussion.

Child's perspective on family capacities for involving in intervention process

Dr. Gabrijela Ratkajec Gašević (University of Zagreb, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences), Dr. Ivana Maurović (University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences), Dr. Anja Mirosavljević (University of Zagreb, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences)

Since the purpose of psychosocial interventions for children and youth with behaviour problems are behaviour changes that are more prosocial and more personally acceptable, researchers and practitioners are focused on finding factors that can facilitate that process. Through research and theoretical models authors tried to explain factors that contribute to better intervention outcomes, emphasising the importance of support from relevant others. Since this is especially important when it comes to children and youth with behavioural problems and their parents, this paper focuses on exploring child's perspective on family capacities for involving in intervention process. More precisely, the child's perspective on problems, family protective mechanisms and parental support will be explored. Data were gathered within the research project "Specific characteristics of families at risk: contribution to complex intervention planning" founded by Croatian Science Foundation. A total of 112 pairs of parents and children (aged 12 to 18 years) who were involved in an intervention in the social care or mental health system due to their behaviour problems participated in the quantitative part of the study. They gave insight in their perception of protective family factors, of reasons they were involved in an intervention and how they perceive parental support related to behaviour change.

Results show that children perceive that 1/3 of problems that led to their involvement in an intervention are related to family circumstances and relationships with parents. Contrary to that, children perceive lot of protective family factors, especially in the area of social support and in the area of family communication, cohesion and organisation. Also, children perceive that parents are ready to provide support for their behaviour change but they perceive parents as less ready to change their own behaviour for child's wellbeing. Comparing children's perception to parental perception, children perceive more problems in families comparing to parents. They perceive the same amount of family protective factors and they perceive less amount of parental support comparing to parental perception of providing support to child.

These results are interpreted in the context of the importance of parents' active participation in interventions aimed at changing behaviour problems of their children. These different, conflicting and multiple child's and parent's perspectives related to problems, family functioning, and providing support, point to the importance of working with the entire family, that is - family as a system. However, such interventions are quite rare in Croatia because existing interventions are oriented toward the child's well-being are fragmented and non-integrated, i.e. they are most often imposed and implemented separately with parents or children.

Clients Participation in the Development of a Tool for the Mapping of Characteristics, Needs, and Strengths of Wards of the Youth Protection Authority

Ms. Anna Gerasimenko (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute), Ms. Hadas Shapira (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute), Dr. Tal Arazi (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute)

Background

The Youth Protection Authority at the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services is in charge of authoritative-coercive out-of-home care services for adolescents at high risk, who are exposed to danger and delinquency. The Youth Protection Authority provides care services for youth aged 12-19 for whom all care interventions along the therapeutic-educational continuum have failed.

The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute and the Youth Protection Authority have recently developed a tool for the evaluation of the situation of wards of the Youth Protection Authority, which maps their characteristics, needs, strengths and resources, as well as previous care interventions.

In the last 30 years, there has been a growing global trend of promoting the participation of social services clients in policy making and in the planning of services and their provision. In view of the moral and practical benefits inherent in the participation of clients, it has been decided to involve former wards of the Youth Protection Authority in the process so as to get their unique perspective at the various stages of the tool development.

Study Goal

The goal of this study is to develop an evaluative tool and map the characteristics, needs, and strengths of wards of the Youth Protection Authority. This tool will serve as a basis for the development and characterization of an ongoing system of outcome measurement in the Youth Protection Authority facilities.

Methodology

The tool was developed following a review of the tools employed in Israel and around the world, and it was based largely on the practice wisdom of social service professionals. The tool development was conducted by a steering committee that took part in all stages of the process, helping to develop the various elements defining the characteristics, strengths, and main areas of need of the youth under the care of the Youth Protection Authority. The team comprised Youth Protection Authority personnel at various levels and representatives of nonprofit organizations that operate protective care facilities. Adult former wards of the Youth Protection Authority were also invited to take part in the committee meetings.

Clients Participation – Barriers and Solutions

The attempts to involve clients in the process met with several barriers, related in part to the difficulties inherent in involving clients in decision-making processes and in part to the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing rules. At first, the study team had to deal with the anticipated feelings of reluctance and discomfort on the part of former wards of the Youth Protection Authority who were invited to take part in the process. To overcome this obstacle, they were offered the option of either joining the steering committee meetings or alternatively, individually communicating with the study team. Yet, due to the social distancing rules in force in Israel at the time, the steering committee meetings were held online so that the unforeseen technical difficulties involved obstructed the participation of those of the former wards who were willing to join the meetings.

To enable the participation of clients in the process, individual conversations were held with former wards of the Youth Protection Authority, in the course of which they told their story, highlighting the characteristics, needs, and strengths of youth at risk, as they saw them, as well as the care interventions that they perceived as effective. Notwithstanding the drawbacks of this mode of participation, which prevented them from taking an active part in the process alongside the professionals and decision makers, at the same level of involvement, it did allow them to share their knowledge and experience while their feelings were respected and their privacy preserved.

Collective Submission “Social pedagogical family support and the best interests of the child: research insights on indication, participation, trust and effectiveness” - Children’s Role and Involvement within the Field of Social Pedagogical Family Support

Ms. Marina Wetzel (FHNW University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland)

Name of the session chair: Roland Becker-Lenz

Social pedagogical family support exists in Switzerland since the 1980s. It is the most frequently provided home-based family service of the Swiss child welfare system. Social pedagogical family support assists parents with parenting problems, structural crises, and relationship problems, all of which may put the well-being of a child at risk. The main goal is to support families in developing and implementing new strategies for coping with challenging situations and ensuring the child’s well-being.

Despite the fact, that children’s well-being is the main focus of this home-based family service, hardly any empirical knowledge exists regarding the role of the children, their involvement, and experiences. To address this research gap, we launched the study “Impact and Impact Factors of Social Pedagogical Family Work” carried out from 2017 until 2020 at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW). We examined the role and involvement of the children using case file analysis, ethnographic observations, and interviews with parents, social pedagogues, and children out of 16 families. The families included in the study were recruited from five different services from diverse regions of the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

In this presentation, I present findings on children’s role and involvement in social pedagogical family support interventions based on a multi-perspective case analysis, including the child’s perspective.

Colombian psychologists' attitudes and knowledge towards the use of treatments argued to have empirical support (ESTs) to treat the psychological impairment resulting from child maltreatment.

Ms. Paola Caro (Social Policy PhD Candidate. School for Policy Studies. Faculty of Social Sciences and Law. University of Bristol)

Background: Twenty-four thousand people up to 18 years old are maltreated in Colombia every year. An average of 68 cases per day. Colombian psychologists' knowledge and attitudes towards the use of empirically supported treatments (ESTs) for the psychological impairment of child maltreatment is unclear. Do Colombian psychologists commonly use, have received training in, would like to receive training in and accurately identify treatments argued to have empirical support? What are the attitudes of Colombian psychologists towards the use of argued ESTs?

Objectives:1) to explore the attitudes towards the use and the knowledge about treatments argued to have empirical support of Colombian psychologists offering psychological treatment to people up to 18 years old who have been maltreated; 2) to identify the factors predicting the attitudes and the knowledge of the practitioners.

Methods: An anonymous and voluntary survey was sent by email to approximately 47,000 Colombian psychologists. The willingness to use empirically supported treatments was ranked from *not at all* to *to a very great extent* according to four dimensions: openness, appeal, requirements and divergence. The practitioners' knowledge on empirically supported treatments was assessed by mapping if the practitioners commonly use, have received training in, would like to receive training in and accurately identify treatments argued to have empirical support. Then, correlation and regression analyses were performed to assess if practitioners' characteristics predict attitudes and knowledge.

Results:558 practitioners consented to participate in the survey and affirmed having offered treatment to maltreated children and adolescents. Forty percent of the practitioners would be open to use treatments argued to have empirical support, based on manuals, research developed treatments and treatments different from those they commonly used. In average, 27% of the practitioners would use an EST if required to do so. In average, 33% of the practitioners would, to a great or to a very great extent, use a new treatment if it is appealing, makes sense, has been used by colleagues and seems known enough to be used. In average, 23% of the practitioners stated that they, to a great or to a very great extent, think that the research-developed treatments are not clinically relevant, that the clinical experience is more important than using treatments based on manuals, that they would not use treatments based on manuals and that they know better how to treat their patients than academics and researchers do. Finally, in average, 14% of the practitioners stated that not at all or to a slightly extent, they think that the research-developed treatments are not clinically relevant, that the clinical experience is more important than using treatments based on manuals, that they would not use treatments based on manuals and that they know better than academics and researchers how to treat their patients. The psychologists were able to accurately identify an average of 1.74 (SD= 1.33) empirically supported treatments as empirically supported. Psychologists were more likely to identify Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (50%) as empirically supported, followed by Abuse-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (38%), Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (35%), Child-Parent Psychotherapy (31%) and Positive Parenting Program (19%).Neither years of clinical experience, practitioners' age, practitioners' theoretical orientation and practitioners' level of education predict lower or higher willingness of the practitioners to use ESTs or accurate identification of ESTs.

Conclusions: Less than the 50% of the Colombian practitioners who participated in the survey would use ESTs irrespective openness, appeal, requirements and divergence. However, most of the participants were able to

accurately identify treatments argued to have empirical support. Results may suggest that dissemination and training in the use of ESTs for the consequences of child maltreatment still has far to go in Colombia.

Coming Out in the Care System in England: Participatory Research with Care Experiences LGBTQ+ Young People

Dr. Jeanette Cossar (University of East Anglia)

Session chair: Rodrigo Gonzalez Alvarez

Symposium title: Voices of LGBTQIA+ Youth in Care. “To that piece in each of us that refuses to be silent”

Title: **Coming out in the care system in England: Participatory research with care experienced LGBTQ+ young people**

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Topics

2. Advances in research methodology
14. Mental health of children and young people in care
18. Anti-oppressive and inclusive practises in care

Objectives

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and questioning (LGBTQ) young people growing up in the care system face a range of challenges shared by other care experienced young people – but they also have additional challenges in managing their minority identities and coping with stigma. Research suggests that LGBT young people in the care system face challenges such as homophobic and transphobic bullying and violence and inadequate responses to their needs by professionals and carers.

This presentation will draw on findings from a national study in England funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council from 2014-2017, with follow up funding from the National Institute of Health Research, CLAHRC 2017-18. The study focused on how LGBTQ+ young people negotiate their identities in a particular context, that of growing up in the care system in England, and the support they receive.

Methods

Interviews with 46 LGBTQ+ young people provided life stories of their pathways from birth families through the care system. This approach attempted to remain open to young people’s ways of describing their experiences and identities rather than imposing a particular set of assumptions about sexual orientation or gender upon them, thus ensuring that the analysis could also incorporate other intersectional aspects of identity that young people made relevant in the interview, such as ethnicity and religious affiliation.

The research team included young researchers who identified as LGBTQ+ and had experience of living in care. They were involved at all stages of the research process including the analysis, to encourage a more sensitive and diverse reading of the data. Follow up funding was used to undertake a participatory film project with six of the young researcher team. The presentation will focus on the work with the young researcher team and present the short animated film.

Results

The short animated film will be presented. The film will be contextualised with brief discussion of the how the findings of the narrative interviews were used in the creation of the film.

Conclusions

There will be discussion of the importance and challenges of recognising young people’s agency within the research process, as well as the importance of LGBTQ+ young people’s perspectives as a topic for research.

Conceptualizing the role of exposure to intimate partner violence for children/youth receiving out-of-home care within a children's mental health setting

Dr. Angelique Jenney (University of Calg)

During the past few decades, there has been an increasing recognition that many, if not the majority of youth in group home treatment settings have experienced complex trauma (e.g., physical, emotional, sexual abuse and/or neglect, exposure to family violence), which often underlie internalizing and externalizing problematic behaviours that precipitated their placement in such programs. This study explored a population at high risk of childhood exposure to intimate partner violence (CEIPV), in order to identify opportunities for identification and intervention approaches in child mental health settings. A qualitative analysis was conducted using retrospective file reviews of children and youth between the ages of 7-17 years who received service at a specified Children's Mental Health Centre within the last five years to explore the mechanisms within children's mental health settings for assessing and responding to the presence of CEIPV in the lives of children and youth. Despite growing knowledge of the impact of CEIPV on children and youth, mental health services for children and youth continue to experience challenges in identification and intervention with this population. Practice implications and recommendations will be presented in order that participants will be able to:

- Make connections between CEIPV and presenting child mental health issues
- Identify gaps in identification, prevention and intervention efforts on a systems level
- Consider impact on training and practice initiatives in child serving sectors such as social work and child and youth care.

Content Development for an operational manual for intercountry adoption social workers in South Africa

Dr. Hanelie Malan (School for Psychosocial Health, North-West University), Mrs. Rene Ferreira (Abba Specialist Adoption & Social Services Organisation)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption and the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, all place a high premium on the need for children to grow up in a family environment.

The children in South Africa faces many challenges with approximately 3 million orphans an alarming increase in child abandonment. Roughly 3500 children survive abandonment every year. Intercountry adoption has become a well-known legal placement option for adoptable children that could not be placed in permanent family care in their country of birth. Although the process is protected by robust legislation, policies and practices, it is characterised by ethical dilemmas and illicit practices. South African child protection organisations accredited to facilitate **intercountry adoption experience challenges in practice due to the lack of clear operative manuals and procedures**. During the adoption process, violations of the most basic rights of the child can occur.

Aim:The aim of this study was to develop the content for an operative manual for intercountry adoption for social workers in South Africa.

Method: Due to limited research on South African specific programmes and manuals regarding inter-country adoption, the researchers utilised an explorative descriptive design. First a ***critical literature review***on national and international practice guidelines and manuals were done. ***Findings*** indicated operational gaps in existing South African practice guidelines, and confirmed the need for an operative manual that addresses the unique child protection environment in South Africa as a Sending country.

Secondly, the researchers utilised focus groups to gain insights from social workers and ultimately to identify practice challenges experienced by them when facilitating an inter country adoption and when implementing the intercountry adoption legislation and guidelines.

The sample consisted of 18 social workers employed by accredited child protection organisations that may facilitate intercountry adoptions in South Africa. A focus group interview schedule focussed on the changing profile of adoptable children and prospective adoptive parents, roles and responsibilities before, during and after the adoption process, the role of social media in intercountry adoption, costing structure and professional fees, legal compliance and therapeutic support. The interview schedule also focussed on origin and roots enquiries. The transcribed data of four focus groups were analysed to identify themes.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that this study contributes insight and knowledge to facilitate intercountry adoption and made recommendations for the content of a practice manual for social workers, facilitating intercountry adoptions, with ethical best practices unique to South Africa as a Sending country. Some of the recommendations are:

- Guideline for bilateral agreements between contracting States
- Service level agreements between the Central Authority and the accredited Child Protection Organisation
- Professional fees and costing
- Networking as part of subsidiarity
- Preparation of prospective adoptive parents. Travelling to South Africa, placement plan, the role of the Child and Youth Care centre, roots tour
- Registration and updating of SA population Register at Department of Home Affairs

- Legal requirements versus the needs of the child
- Post adoption services and origin and roots search

Continuity and discontinuity for children in out of home care

Dr. Lisa Holmes (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Dr. Mariela Neagu (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Dr. Eran Melkman (Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

Background and Purpose: Social relationships are key in promoting the socio-emotional well-being of vulnerable groups, including children in out-of-home care. Nonetheless, pre- and in- care adversities often leave children in out-of-home care with few long-lasting connections to rely on for support. This paper examines the various people who make up the core network of important relationships for children in out-of-home care, the potential to re-establish these relationships, and the junctures along children's care histories where relationships were initially lost.

Methods: The study draws on 39 semi-structured interviews and 17 focus groups with social workers and/or other professionals in children's social care services and 11 interviews and focus groups with foster carers in England. These were conducted as a part of the English evaluation of Lifelong Links, which aims to build long-lasting support networks for children in out-of-home care.

Findings: The interviews suggest that children have a rich and varied social network of important people with whom they can reconnect, often overlooked by children's social care services. Restrictions of contact with family members, first introduced when children entered care, some of which relied on partial or incorrect information, were rarely reviewed over time. Family dynamics, such as (absent) parents key role in mediating and gatekeeping children's social networks also contributed to the loss of relationships. We will outline how Lifelong Links has been used in 12 areas in England to support the (re)-establishment of important relationships, as determined by children in out-of-home care, including with their birth family and with previous carers.

Conclusions: Our findings highlight the need for social network informed practices in social work with children in out-of-home care and similarly disadvantaged populations. We will also explore the impact of (re)-established social networks on the outcomes of children and young people in out-of-home care and will set out recommendations for potential replication of the Lifelong Links approach for other jurisdictions and contexts.

Contribution of interdependent living skills to young people's transition from residential care towards young adulthood in South Africa

Ms. Sasam Reuben (Girls and Boys Town South Africa), Prof. Adrian van Breda (University of Johannesburg)

Programmes to support young people transitioning from care towards young adulthood can arguably be categorised into two main approaches: equipping young people with independent living skills (such as budgeting, shopping and navigating government systems) or facilitating their access to services such as housing, education and employment. Evaluation studies on independent living programmes have tended show disappointing results, and the suite of services offered in some countries are unaffordable and unmanageable in most Global South countries, including South Africa. A third programme approach is thus required.

Research on care-leaving in South Africa, and indeed globally, has shown that relationships appear central to the successful transition towards young adulthood – relationships with family, staff of service systems, employers, neighbours, friends and lovers. It would seem, therefore, that what is required is an INTERdependent living programme that equips young people in care with the interpersonal skills to navigate relationships with others. The extent to which a care-leaver is able to foster and mobilise relationships (both intimate and passing relationships, both strong and weak ties) appears to determine the extent to which the care-leaver navigates effectively into young adulthood.

This paper presents the findings from a study of a social skills programme offered by Girls and Boys Town (GBT) in South Africa. This programme is embedded in the foundation of GBT's residential programme from entry into care until disengagement from care. A total of 41 young people were interviewed using a semi-structured interview: 20 who were on the verge of leaving care and 21 who had left care from one to five years previously. Primary emphasis is given in this paper to those who had already left care.

This presentation focuses on how young people used the skills they learned – in what contexts and in what ways did they use which skills? In addition, the perceived value of these skills for life after care will be addressed. For example, youth reported that when people see you listening attentively (one of the skills taught), they engage more closely, take more seriously what you say and are more likely to respond helpfully. Participants also narrated how these interpersonal skills contributed towards their capacity to take care of themselves after leaving care.

The findings of this study suggest that greater attention should be given to developing the interdependent living skills of young people in care, so that they can more effectively navigate their social environment after leaving care.

Coping and hoping: examining engagement strategies for multi-barriered youth who use opioids and other substances.

Ms. Katie Horton (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Annie Smith (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Maya Peled (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Stephanie Martin (McCreary Centre Society)

Objective: This presentation focuses on a knowledge summary generated by youth with experience of the child welfare system (e.g. foster care) aimed at identifying best practices for youth engagement that is targeted at low-resourced/multi-barriered youth who use opioids and other substances.

In Canada, those aged 15-24 are the fastest growing group to experience hospitalization from opioid overdoses (Health Canada, March 2019). Traditionally, substance use programs for opioid dependency are targeted at older street-involved adults, resulting in program environments that are potentially unsafe and inaccessible for youth. Taking that into account, the knowledge summary sought to highlight the barriers and best practices of youth engagement in substance use programming, but also to include recommendations from youth that directly related to their own experiences of engagement in programming.

Methods: A cohort of youth aged 16-24 with experience of the child welfare system were hired by a non-profit research organization as part of the Youth Research Academy (YRA) and trained in community-based research skills (such as survey design, data entry, data analysis, report writing).

The YRA, with the support of trained researchers, conducted a search of published literature using relevant research databases. This included a search of grey literature using various search engines. They compiled articles and studies into themes and analyzed key findings. Using their shared lived experience, they reflected on the key findings and made recommendations for practice and programming to the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse, an organization seeking to address the opioid crisis in Canada.

Results: Through the literature review the YRA identified a number of barriers to engaging low-resourced/multi-barriered youth in substance use programming. Some of these included insufficient availability, rigidity of programming, and strict requirements for entry.

The YRA also found and critiqued evidence-based programs and practices which were successfully engaging multi-barriered substance using young people, and considered their applicability in Canada.

The YRA noted that in addition to the benefit of having youth meaningfully engaged in programming, it was especially beneficial to involve low-resourced/multi-barriered youth in leadership and planning roles. If youth are engaged in decision-making about a program that directly affects them, they are more inclined to be invested in that program.

Recommendations from the YRA were based on the evidence they found in the literature as well as their own life experiences. These recommendations included ensuring programs allow youth true agency and choice and supporting them to be as involved in design and delivery to the degree that they are comfortable. They emphasized that clear communication about roles can lead to more authentic engagement in decision-making. Programs should focus on a holistic approach, addressing the mental and emotional health of the youth as well, ensuring they see the young person as more than just their substance use.

The report is now being used by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and partner service providers to inform best practice and policy.

Conclusion: Supporting youth with lived experience to research and summarize existing youth engagement strategies—and allowing space for them to make recommendations based on their own perspective and voice—translated into a knowledge summary that is both rich and concrete in implementation. It delivered recommendations that were truly ‘youth-focused’ as they were rooted in the very demographic that agencies are seeking to engage. This demonstrates the critical need for agencies and governments to invite the youth that are being directly affected by issues such as the opioid crisis to be a part of their process as they seek to address this important health concern.

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Coping Strategies in Life Stories of Young Adults with Foster Care Backgrounds

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Each child or adolescent, placed in out-of-home care, has been exposed to experiences related to parenting that can be defined as developmental risk factors. These adversities may include exposure to childhood maltreatment, marital violence, poverty, parental abuse of intoxicants, committing an illegal act, severe neglect or other traumatic experiences (Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 1997). Exposure to traumatic experiences has detrimental effects on some children and youth and they react to the experiences in different ways. Despite the presence of challenging or threatening circumstances, some individuals demonstrate a capacity for successful adaptation, which is referred to as resilience (Cicchetti & Garmezy, 1993; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Murphy, 1974; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1982). An individual's personal characteristics and his or her coping strategies have a major impact on the resilience. Whereas resilience refers to positive adaptation, coping can be seen as purposeful, although not always effective, attempt to manage stressful life events and circumstances concurrently or retrospectively (Compas, Malcarne, & Fondacaro, 1988; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Wright & Masten, 2005).

This study examines what kind of coping strategies young adults with foster care background use to cope with challenges and adversities, utilizing avoidant and approach dimensions of coping strategies as a framework (Compas et al., 2001; Krause et al., 2008). The participants were 18 Finnish young adults aged 18-32, who have experienced foster care in family setting. The data consists of individual interviews conducted using a narrative approach and time line method.

Findings revealed that participants utilized both avoidant and approach coping strategies to deal with past experiences of adversity and current challenges. In the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2003), three main themes and one additional theme of coping strategies were identified. First, *inward orientation*, indicated avoidant coping which was used by repressing thoughts and feelings or through escape. Second, *outward orientation*, could represent either avoidant or approach coping, and it was utilized by ventilating feelings or by seeking safety. Third, *influencing one's circumstances*, indicated approach coping where the participants utilized cognitive rationalization e.g. by creating rules and routines, and by seeking to understand the underlying factors for parental behavior. The additional theme, *acceptance*, was utilized only at an older age when young adults reflected on their past experiences. Acceptance was defined as approach coping which the participants expressed via forgiveness or acceptation of their experiences, current situation or themselves. Findings echo the previous coping research among children and adolescence (Hampel et al., 2005; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2011), wherein coping strategies vary depending on the individual, the specific challenge and the phase of life. Nevertheless, the present study showed that it is possible to identify some coping approaches typical of individuals facing the challenges related to foster care, such as seeking safety and escape. This study also showed that great variations exist in the set of specific coping strategies utilized by the young adults. Differences in the specific coping strategies may stem from the retrospective nature of the narrative data, the participants' different life situations, the resources available to each participant and their personal characteristics. Therefore, it would be important that child welfare social workers and other adults would listen the experiences of foster care youth and help them to find their individual coping strategies to support their development.

Creating Normalcy - Foster Care for Children and Youth with Disabilities and Medical Fragility in Germany

Dr. Friedegard Föltz (Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, An der Ihle 19, 39291 Friedensau, Germany)

In the area of foster care concerning children and youth with special needs due to disability or medical fragility, there is only little knowledge and research. In Germany, they are a rather invisible and forgotten population at risk in foster care. Mostly these children and youth are cared for in residential homes, yet some are living in foster families and profit from a familial setting.

In their case, ‘the perspective of the child´ also has to imply having an explicit perspective *on* the child. Children and youth with disabilities and medical fragility as a minoritized group in fostercare are often unable to speak for themselves, even in participatory research approaches. Quality in child welfare and advocacy in the area of family fostercare for children affected by disability require a closer look at the experiences and needs of caregivers as well as possibly looking at the perspective of the child. Giving space to foster parents to share their view on their experiences and needs in order to fulfill those of the child in care contributes to an even broader perspective on the lives of foster children with special needs. At that moment, both points of view join into one common focal point which is the best interest of the child or youth.

The purpose of the study was to understand how foster parents manage their lives with a special needs child or youth and meet the challenges of assisting them adequately. It generated insights into how a child is integrated into the foster family and how foster parents emotionally bond with their children, and also how the mobilization of resources and the development of strategies in managing the situation are evolving.

The qualitative research design used the instrument of narrative inquiry through in-depth interviews. Within the framework of Grounded Theory, the author developed a theoretical structure of the strategies foster parents use for coping. Results showed that foster parents dealt with this new and often unpredictable situation by applying an *Action-, Resource- or Reflection Strategy* based on their own personal biographic experiences and their worldview.

Understanding these behavioral strategies gives administrative and supportive entities like child welfare systems and agencies a unique and tailored approach to recruit, retain, train and counsel foster families adequately, strengthen their well-being and ability to perform well for themselves and their children and youth.

Cross-cultural adaptation of a Children's Rights questionnaire. Be aware of their rights as a prevention and promotion tool.

Dr. Aida Urrea Monclús (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)), Dr. Gabriela Martínez Sainz (University College Dublin (UCD)), Dr. Benjamin Mallon (Dublin City University (DCU)), Dr. Malgosia Machowska-Kosciak (Dublin City University (DCU))

Introduction. Many countries, including Spain and Ireland, have developed regulations and measures to apply the precepts of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Even so, studies show that children and adolescents are not aware of much of children's rights (Urrea, Coiduras, Alsinet, Balsells, 2018) and, therefore, are not agents of their own rights (Waldron & Oberman, 2016). All this has revealed the need to investigate and propose diagnostic and intervention educational tools. If they know their own rights they will be aware of these rights, but also they will be aware of their responsibilities. According to these ideas, in a previous project "Design of an assessment of the knowledge of children's rights for students" (2017-2019), two questionnaires were developed in Spanish.

There are two questionnaires, one for children between 9 and 12 years old, and another for adolescents between 12 and 16 years old. The questionnaires on the students' knowledge of child rights are based on Situational Judgement Test and measure not only the knowledge if not the behavior and the attitudes towards children's rights of children (primary school questionnaire) and adolescents (post primary school questionnaire).

However, we live in an increasingly multicultural and multilingual society and it is important to have the same tools in more than one language. There is a difference between countries and cultures, which makes evident the importance of not only the translation but also the cross-cultural adaptation of the questionnaires to the specific population.

Objective. The aim of this communication is to present the cross-cultural adaptation process of the Children's Rights Questionnaire from Spanish to English.

Method. To apply the questionnaires to an Irish sample it is needed the cross-cultural adaptation of the test from Spanish to English. To realize this adaptation we have followed different steps: direct translation, synthesis, back translation, judges committee evaluation and testing the pre-final version. After the analysis of this part, we also will carry out the validation of the questionnaires.

Results. The results indicate differences in the conceptualization of some questions. For example, regarding questions that have to do with child protection and how it is applied in the Spanish or Irish education system or regarding cultural aspects such as the establishment of friendly relations.

Conclusions. The results show the need to adapt the questionnaires and tests to the different populations and cultures. Lack of equivalence between questionnaires limits the comparability of results among populations and also the results are not significant for the participants. This way they will help to work towards the achievement of new theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of children's rights and global citizenship in education.

Keywords: Translation, adaptation, situational judgment test, children's rights, protection

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Cross-sectoral professional development to enhance education outcomes for Australian children and young people in out-of-home care

Dr. Patricia McNamara (University of Melbourne), Ms. Joanna Humphries (Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Victoria), Dr. Iain Matheson (Research Centre for Better Outcomes for Fostering and Residential Care)

Education outcomes for children in out-of-home care (OOHC) remain below normative community expectations, notwithstanding improved levels of awareness and recent research, policy and programmatic initiatives (McNamara, Montserrat & Wise, 2020). Relatively few care leavers complete secondary schooling and progress to university or other tertiary education compared with young people in mainstream society. Problems in bio-psycho-social development for children in care often begin early in childhood and can adversely impact learning throughout the school years and after leaving school. Neuro-psychological research over the past fifteen years, has provided more definitive evidence on how trauma, abuse and neglect can make mainstream learning challenging for young people in care and post care. When specialised supports and interventions are inaccessible, it is often beyond reach (Perry, 2014; Van der Kolk, 2015). Programs manifesting awareness of these issues that appear to be making a difference in Australia have addressed learning issues across the formal learning trajectory. These include early years learning, literacy and numeracy in primary years, secondary school engagement and transition to tertiary education.

A growing awareness exists that cultural/ sub-cultural shifts toward higher educational aspirations for these young people and more targeted responses to the specific learning challenges confronting them can be enhanced by training of educators and caregivers. An approach which appears to be gaining traction in Australia is cross-sectoral professional development for teachers, social workers, youth workers, foster carers, kinship carers, residential workers and other stakeholders. There is evidence that education and OOHC sectors working closely together is likely to optimise training outcomes (Cameron, Connelly & Jackson 2017) .

Australian curriculum development for such professional development often lacks programmatic cohesion, continuity and adequate resourcing. In this context, improvement in education outcomes for young people in care is likely to be compromised. This paper explores the formal evidence base and grey literature related to training in this area. It also draws upon the authors' own recent professional development initiatives in Australia, Hong Kong, Malta, New Zealand and the US. We highlight the critical import of collaborating with and giving voice to children and young people who have lived experience of education in care.

Policy, practice and research suggestions are made that might enhance development of cross-sectoral training programs focused on education of children in care, within Australia and internationally. Such training has potential to improve both the quality of learning experiences and progress toward normative education outcomes for these children and young people. Those experiences and outcomes are the birthright of all (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

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Cultural Encounters in Transnational Child Protection

Dr. Thomas Meysen (SOCLES International Centre for Socio-Legal Studies)

Transnational families and, technically speaking, cross-border child protection goes along with cultural encounters. Attributing „culture" to fathers, mothers, children and families can be considered as a contested concept. Culture is neither a static nor homogenous, but rather a complex and polysemous concept. It refects social and power tensions and can be seen as a political arena, both within academia and politics. It is attributed to dominant groups and, at the same time, to marginalised groups marking difference. These encounters play out in transnational practice. Professionals are required to balance the risk of stereotyping and being culturally sensitive. Ethical practice calls for them staying open and curious how the persons they work with see themselves and what their believes and values are. Furthermore, when cooperating with professionals from a different child protection system judgements and procedures that seemed to be taken for granted can be at stake. Language barriers and translations issues add to potential misunderstandings when professionals only apparently mean the same – or something different. Differing welfare state patterns and historical periods shape the context of intervention policies and institutions. The aim of understanding how interventions aimed to protect children from harm interrelate in different and country-specifc ways. In transnational practice patterns that frame context and rationale of state-led or state funded intervention need to be contextualised in the light of the diversity of laws, policies and institution across borders. The presentation will draw on international comparative research Cultural Encounters in Interventions Against Violence (CEINAV) in which the partners from four countries – England & Wales, Germany, Portugal and Slovenia – listened to voices of professionals and of victim-survivors (http://tinyurl.com/ceinavproject; Carol Hagemann-White, Liz Kelly & Thomas Meysen, eds., 2019). It will highlight challenges when working transnationally in the field of child protection.

Current Experiences of Warmth and Safeness: Validation study of a self-report measure for adolescents in residential care

Ms. Laura Santos (University of Coimbra, Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive and Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Mr. Rúben Sousa (University of Coimbra, Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive and Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Ms. Diana Gomes (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Prof. Maria do Rosário Pinheiro (University of Coimbra, Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive and Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Prof. Daniel Rijo (University of Coimbra, Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive and Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra)

Most adolescents in residential care had experienced disruptions in their attachment relationships with primary caregivers. As a result, they tend to show social and psychological vulnerabilities, such as emotional problems, withdraw and difficulties to connect to others, especially with current caregivers in residential care.

Considering the important role of experiences of care, warmth and safeness with significant others on emotion regulation and psychological well-being, it would be important to have an instrument that allows to assess this construct in adolescence, and particularly in residential care, in order to improve interventions and care practices.

This poster presents a new and brief measure designed to assess the adolescents' perception of their current experiences of warmth and safeness (CEWSS-A). Its factor structure and psychometric properties (i.e., measurement invariance, test-retest reliability and validity in relation to external variables) were investigated, using a sample of 772 adolescents (49% boys and 51% girls, with a mean age of 15.62 years old), including 453 community adolescents and 319 adolescents from residential care facilities. A confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the 12-item scale presents a one-factor measurement model with good fit for the data taken from all samples. The CEWSS-A showed an adequate internal consistency in the different samples ($\alpha > .92$), an acceptable temporal stability in the community ($r = .623$) and at-risk ($r = .768$) samples, and construct validity in relation to external variables (i.e., early memories of warmth and safeness, compassion, negative and positive affect, aggressive behaviour and internalizing symptoms). The CEWSS-A also proved to be gender and group invariant. Boys scored significantly higher than girls in both samples and residential care participants reported lower scores of current experiences of warmth and safeness in comparison with community adolescents.

To conclude, the CEWSS-A is an appropriate self-report measure to clinical and research purposes, namely to assess if adolescents in residential care feel soothed, safe, warmth and cared for by caregivers, and additionally, to provide information to improve care practices.

Decision Making and Judgement in Child Welfare and Protection: Theory, Research and Practice

Prof. John Fluke (University of Co), Prof. Rami Benbenishty (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Dr. Joel Gautschi (University of Applied Sc), Dr. Sarah Font (Pennsylvania State University), Dr. Cora Bartelink (The Hague University of Applied Sciences)

Professionals working in child welfare and child protection are making decisions with crucial implications for children and families on a daily basis. The types of judgements and decisions they make vary and include decisions such as whether a child is at risk of significant harm by parents, whether to remove a child from home or to reunify a child with parents after some time in care. These decisions are intended to help achieve the best interests of the child. Unfortunately, they can sometimes also doom children and families unnecessarily to many years of pain and suffering.

Surprisingly, despite the central role of judgments and decision making in professional practice and its deep impact on children and families, child welfare and protection training and research programs have paid little attention to this crucial aspect of practice. Furthermore, although extensive knowledge about professional judgment and decision making has been accumulated in relevant areas, such as medicine, business administration, and economics, little has been done to help transfer and translate this knowledge to the child welfare and protection areas.

This symposium is intended to provide participants with the ideas, methods and tools to improve their understanding of how context and decision-maker behaviors affect child welfare and protection decision making, and how such knowledge might lead to improvements in decision-making. The symposium will include five presentations:

Presentation one introduces the theories that are in use to help guide decision making research in child welfare. Presentation two is an overview of the empirical methods that can be applied in child welfare contexts. Presentation three present results from an delusional analysis of representative sample of children in the US who were investigated and decision to substantiate maltreatment. The fourth paper presents results of a quasi-experimental study of placement decisions among professionals in the Netherlands with and without exposure to a placement guidance framework. The final presentation summarizes the state of research and provides some conceptual thinking to help orient future research and ways it can be applied to improving decision making in child welfare.

Decision Making and Judgement in Child Welfare and Protection: Theory, Research and Practice - Advancing the field of decision making and judgement in child welfare and protection: A look back and forward

Prof. John Fluke (University of Colorado), Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen), Prof. Rami Benbenishty (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Prof. Erik Knorth (University of Groningen), Dr. Donald Baumann (SaintEdward's University)

Our knowledge of decision making in child welfare has evolved concurrent with the recognition that there is variability in the rates at which children and families experience no involvement to deeper involvement in the system from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and person to person. In this synthesis of concepts and studies we recap the reasons it is important and challenging to identify systematic causes for variability in decisions and what can be learned about them. Child protection systems have a history of relying on both formal and informal assessments of children and families. While research indicates that emphasis on assessment is warranted, errors and mistakes can happen in all the stages of the assessment and decision processes due to a range of system and human factors and we present some examples here.

We also highlight important insights that have been gained about context as a key determinant of decisions. The DME/GADM and JUDPiC theoretical models explicate multiple layers of context: organizational, regional (e.g., differences between sub-jurisdictions), and nationally. At the level of individual, studies of decision making at the point of out-of-home placement suggest that "pro-removal" attitudes influence respondents to remove children. Context also addresses the ways that teams approach decision making and how interactions among team members have mixed potential to improve on individual decision making.

Finally, we identify gaps in the research on child welfare decision making. Key among these are decisions by teams, relating decisions to outcomes, and the use of new technologies like predictive risk modeling. To move the decision making research forward we recommend melding methods such as vignette and behavioral studies. We also recommend the translation of decision making research through the use of quantitative studies that are experimental, and qualitative approaches such as think aloud techniques and shadowing related to systems, and finally research attention to the roles of child participation in decision making.

Key reference:

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Decision Making and Judgement in Child Welfare and Protection: Theory, Research and Practice - Introduction to Theories and Concepts

Prof. Rami Benbenishty (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Prof. John Fluke (University of Colo)

This presentation provides an introduction to concepts, theoretical perspectives, and areas of scholarship that may serve as background for some of the complexities involved in understanding and improving decision making in child welfare and protection.

We present the basic concepts that underlie decisions in this area – making choices in decision environments characterized by high levels of uncertainty. We distinguish between normative models as to how decision-makers ought to choose between alternatives and descriptive models that describe how they tend to make these choices in real life. Descriptive models show that due to many reasons, including lack of complete information, limitations in information processing capacity and various other human limitations, decision-makers are not following normative models.

This presentation reviews some of the challenges of human decision-makers that may be especially relevant in the context of child welfare and protection. We review the literature on the different weights that decision-makers give to potential losses compared with gains and how this makes them vulnerable to variations in how decision tasks are being framed. Consequently, different decisions are being made in the same case, if framed in terms of losses or gains. We also describe how decision-makers tend to overlook the important information of base rate and tend to have 'hindsight bias'. We review strategies to correct some of these limitations in judgment. We examine the relationships between judgments made by decision-makers and their judgments and between workers' predictions of what would be the outcomes of the case and the actual outcomes. In this context, we describe two types of error (false positive and false negative) and the related concepts of specificity and sensitivity. We follow up on these issues by describing the Lens model, and some of its implications for child welfare decision making, including predictive risk modeling and studies on the information processing models.

In the final part we present current models in child welfare decision making and describe in some detail the Decision Making Ecology (DME) and the Judgments and Decision Processes in Context (JUDPiC). We conclude with suggestions for future research on child welfare decision making.

Decision Making and Judgement in Child Welfare and Protection: Theory, Research and Practice - Placement decisions: reliability and validity of decisions made with and without the Guideline "Out-of-home placement"

Dr. Cora Bartelink (The Hague University of Applied Sciences), Ms. Anne Addink (Netherlands Youth Institute), Ms. Nikki Udo (Netherlands Youth Institute), Prof. Tom van Yperen (University of Groningen)

Objectives: Out-of-home placement is the most severe intervention in the lives of parents and children facing problems with parenting and development. This high impact decision needs to be made with greatest caution, because of what is at stake, the child's healthy development.

Again and again, professionals in child welfare and child protection disagree on placement decisions and rationales for their decisions may not be clear. It is known that decisions are influenced by personal characteristics, for example age, work experience, having children and having childhood and/or work-related traumatic experiences.

Often, guidelines are introduced to improve decision-making. The impact of these guidelines seems limited. Many decisions are made in team discussions, that can broaden the individuals' perspective, but can also be vulnerable to biases (e.g., tunnel vision). The combination of the use of a guideline and systematic team decision-making may however improve decisions made. Therefore, we investigated in our study the interrater and test-retest reliability and criterion validity of out-of-home placement decisions made with and without the guidelines and supported by a behavioral scientist.

Methods: This study used a mixed-method design, which incorporated a vignette study, a practice study and a small explorative observational study. We compared two groups of professionals: one group used the mandated Guidelines for Out-of-Home Placement for child and youth care and child protection (i.e., they were trained in the use of the guidelines and the decision-making process in the questionnaire was structured according to the guidelines); the other group was not trained to use this guideline. In the vignette study, professionals assessed with a four month interval several cases and decided whether the child needed to be placed in out-of-home care to estimate interrater and test-retest reliability. To estimate criterion validity, in the practice study professionals made decision about real-life cases, which were compared with an expert panel consisting of experienced behavioral scientists. In the final observational study, sound recordings were made in team meetings. These materials were analyzed to explore in depth how decisions were made in teams (i.e., content analysis and team processes).

Results: The vignette study showed low interrater reliability, but surprisingly also low test-retest reliability in both groups. An analysis of the rationales revealed that relevant reasons (e.g., child safety, parenting capacities, child development) were rarely mentioned and reasons were inconsistently used at the two time points. In the practice study, about half of the decisions made by professionals corresponded with the expert panel's decisions; in the trained group the correspondence with the expert panel was slightly higher than in the group not trained. The observation study showed that team discussions on placement decisions focus on family and environmental factors and to lesser extent on child development and parenting practices; child safety was hardly mentioned. The outcomes of the observational study were comparable to our analysis of written rationales in the vignette study. The analyses of rationales and team discussions raise questions about the implementation of the guideline.

Conclusion: The results confirm and add to previous research. As previously was found, our study shows differences in decisions between professionals. Our in-depth analyses of rationales and team decision-making processes may explain these differences, as these qualitative analyses show that relevant reasons may not be

explored well enough and/or may be emphasized inconsistently. Concluding, our study shows how hard it is to optimize decision-making. In our view, a different approach than only developing instruments and guidelines is needed. Our findings and alternative approaches will be discussed.

Decision Making and Judgement in Child Welfare and Protection: Theory, Research and Practice - The Decision to Substantiate Allegations of Child Maltreatment

Dr. Sarah Font (Pennsylvania State University), Dr. Kathryn Maguire-Jack (University of Michigan), Ms. Rebecca Dillard (Ohio State University)

In the United States, the Child Protective Services system is responsible for investigating and responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect. At the conclusion of an investigation, caseworkers are expected to decide whether allegations are "substantiated" (demonstrated to be true) or not. How that decision is made – and whether it reflects an objective assessment of the evidence available – is widely debated.

We will first present an overview of the decision-making process and the implications of decision-making for vulnerable children and families. The presentation will specifically focus on the implications for the alleged perpetrators of child maltreatment, who are subject to placement on a "central registry" of perpetrators, and the implications for children, for whom decisions about services, monitoring, and intervention may hinge on the substantiation decision.

Second, we will describe how rates of substantiation vary across and within the United States, demonstrating that the meaning of substantiation is not fixed in place or time. We will present data showing that even within state, where statutory definitions and requirements are uniform, there is widespread variation in substantiation rates.

We will then present data from a nationally representative survey of Child Protective Services investigations on the factors associated with the decision to substantiate child maltreatment. We find that agency characteristics are predictive of substantiation, net of child and family characteristics. Our data suggest that practical constraints on agencies affect substantiation, such that substantiation is not an objective evaluation that determines whether an allegation of maltreatment is true or false.

Finally, we discuss possible strategies for improving the consistency and utility of the substantiation decision. Strategies to be discussed include predictive analytics, team decision-making procedures, and further separation of substantiation and intervention decisions.

Decision Making and Judgement in Child Welfare and Protection: Theory, Research and Practice – Empirical Methods for Studying Decision Making in Child Welfare and Protection

Dr. Joel Gautschi (FHNW University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland), Prof. Rami Benbenishty (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Professional decision making and judgment in general, and in the area of child welfare and protection in particular, are complex processes. They are often described as mixture of art and science, intuition and rational choice, and quick and slow processes. Decisions in this area combine human judgment, prediction of future events under uncertainty, and choices made among alternatives, based on multiple factors, including case information, contextual factors, values, and policy directives. Given the importance of these decisions and their complexity, the challenges associated with studying them, so that they could be improved, are formidable.

This presentation aims to describe the current state of the art of the most prominent empirical methods used to study decision making in child welfare and child protection, and to identify empirical methods from other fields, with the potential to advance decision-making research in our domain. We describe these methods critically, to assess their advantages and limitations. We end with some ideas as to future promising directions.

Our interest is in the whole range of judgments and decisions made in child welfare and child protection. As prototypical decision tasks we have considered two main challenges - using information about a case in order to arrive at a final judgment or choice (e.g., assessing whether a child is at risk and deciding whether to remove the child from home), and considering several alternative courses of action for a case (e.g., choosing a foster family from several available alternatives).

We follow the distinction made by Benbenishty (1992) between modeling the relationships between the input and output of the decision process, without trying to model the processes that lead from input to output (a 'black box' approach), and modeling the decision processes leading from the input to the output. Each of these approaches has its strengths and limitations. For instance, while 'input-output' analyses may provide more valid, reliable, replicable, and parsimonious models that could predict effectively outcomes of decision-making processes, process tracing may produce models that would help develop a theory of practice, and are more intuitively understood by practitioners and therefore could be translated into practice guidelines more easily. Because both these lines of research have the potential to contribute to our critical examination of decision making and to improvement efforts in child protection, we will follow this basic classification and review them both.

Decision making in child welfare: Examining the role of child welfare workers

Dr. Kristen Lwin (University of Windsor), Dr. Barbara Fallon (University of Toronto)

Objective: Workers are the connection between the child welfare system and the families who receive services. The decisions that child welfare make are essential points within the service continuum. Importantly, decisions guide families through the system and establish subsequent service options. While decision making is an important part of child welfare services, little is known about the worker characteristics that are associated with decisions. Therefore, this study examines the key point within the Canadian child welfare context, whereby workers must identify their perception of the risk of future maltreatment.

Methods: This study utilizes secondary analyses to answer the following research questions: What clinical and child welfare worker characteristics predict worker's perception of the risk of future maltreatment? Are there differences among Canadian child welfare workers' perception of the risk of future maltreatment?

To answer the research questions, this study examined data from the most recent iteration of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS-2008), the only national child welfare study and aims to produce estimates of child maltreatment investigations (Trocmé et al., 2010). Stratified random sampling was used in the CIS and occurred in three stages: 1) selection of a representative sample of child welfare organizations across Canada; 2) selection of cases sampled over a three-month period (October 1st to December 31st); and 3) workers identified children who were the subject of a maltreatment related investigations.

This study is unique in its analyses, as multilevel modelling was used to assess the association between clinical and worker characteristics and each decision point. Multilevel modelling is an appropriate method of statistical analysis for these data, as it considers clustering at the child level. This analysis, therefore, assumes that children may be served differently based on their worker. To answer the research questions, clinical (e.g., child functioning, caregiver risk factors, maltreatment type) and worker (e.g., education level, education field, caseload, experience, training, age, ethnicity) level variables were included in the analyses.

Results: Descriptive results illustrate that several clinical characteristics and worker characteristics significantly predict worker's perception of the risk of future maltreatment. Multilevel analyses (n = 4327) found that workers with less than two years of experience, workers who provide ongoing services, and workers with a caseload less than 13 were significantly more likely to identify the risk of future maltreatment than their counterparts. Further, the interaction between worker training and worker caseload significantly predicted their perception of the risk of future maltreatment. The intraclass correlation coefficient indicates 25% variance at the worker level, suggesting differences among workers' decision to substantiate maltreatment allegations.

Conclusion: Taken together, these findings suggest that worker characteristics predict worker's perception of the risk of future maltreatment. Results of these analyses, along with existing literature, suggest that differences among workers' decisions may lie in characteristics associated with characteristics typically outside of those used to recruit or hire staff. Further implications are explored.

Decision-making and Participation of Children in the Child Protection System

Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen)

Abstract

Ensuring the participation of children in child protection systems is becoming a priority. Research evidence supports the benefits for children who are afforded this right. Children's participation in decision-making processes in child protection has been linked to positive effects on children's well-being and sense of safety, better acceptance of the out-of-home placement decision and higher stability of the placement, and reduced anxiety and anger towards the care decision. Overall, the participation of children in their own protective processes seems to contribute to the success of the interventions, and therefore provides an opportunity for developing more effective child protection systems. Yet, the actual participation of children in decision-making regarding their own child protection pathways seems to be very limited in many systems.

This symposium will focus on the challenges of children's participation in child protection decision-making using different perspectives and methods. We will discuss topics such as courts' consideration of child's perspectives, children's involvement in family group conferences, the implementation of children's right to participate in policy and practice, and the experiences of participation of youth during their time in out-of-home care. The contributors will discuss proposals for policy improvement, best practice models, and recommendations for future research regarding the involvement of children in child protection decision-making. The audience will have the opportunity to discuss with symposium presenters and to contribute to the conclusions and recommendations.

Contributions

1. *The Invisible Child: The Child's Perspective in Judicial Decision-Making in Eight European Countries*. Katrin Kriz, Jenny Krutzinna, Tarja Pösö & Marit Skivenes
2. *Seen but Not Heard? Understanding Children's Experiences with the Family Group Conference*. Lisa Merkel-Holguin
3. *Children's Participation over Time in Germany*. Susanne Witte
4. *The Space to be Myself: The Participation of LGBTQIA+ Youth in Out-of-home Care*. Mijntje ten Brummelaar, Rodrigo González Álvarez & Mónica López López
5. *The Role of Evidence in the Implementation of Children's Rights: Child Participation in Evidence Creation and Decision-making*.Roberta Ruggiero

Decision-making and Participation of Children in the Child Protection System-Children's Participation over Time in Germany

Dr. Susanne Witte (German Youth Institute)

Background

Over the last decades, the awareness of children's rights has increased in European countries. This also includes the children's right to be involved in decision-making processes that concern them. In child protection, discussions regarding children's participation increased as well. Whereas the legal framework and expert opinions stress the importance of children's participation, it remains unclear if children's participation has also increased in practice.

Objectives

The presentation focuses on the children's participation over the last three decades of practice in a specialized child protection unit in Germany. Correlates of participation, as well as differences between documented participation and participation reported by previous clients are presented.

Method

Three different sources of information are used to answer the research questions: 1) a quantitative analyses of case files from 1985 to 2014 at a specialized child protection unit, 2) a follow-up of cases using information from case files at the local children and youth services authority, and 3) a survey of previous clients of the specialized child protection unit.

Results

There is an increase in documented children's participation over the three decades. However, approximately 50% of the cases in the new millennium still do not have children's participation documented in the case file. Throughout all decades, a high number of contacts with the child increases the likelihood of children's participation. Moreover, children's participation is more frequent in cases with risk of significant harm. Differences between documented participation and the participation reported by previous clients are highlighted in terms of service provision and children's well-being.

Discussion

The results have to be interpreted in light of the limitations of the data collections, thus as using case files as information and a selective response rate of previous clients to the survey. More research is needed to understand how children's participation can benefit their well-being.

Decision-making and Participation of Children in the Child Protection System-Seen but Not Heard? Understanding Children's Experiences with the Family Group Conference

Mrs. Lisa Merkel-Holguin (Kempe Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado)

Objectives

- Describe the results from a small sample of child and young people participating in FGC that suggest differences in their perspectives regarding family empowerment, transparency and inclusion in decision making, when compared to the perspectives of other family members and professionals for whom data are available.
- Translate these findings into FGC practice improvements

Background

"Nothing about me without me" is a maxim lauded in social work venues, including participatory action research (Nelson *et al.*, 1998). Inviting service users to decision-making tables has become increasingly prevalent in many areas of social work practice, including in child welfare. Family group conferences (FGC) and other, similar practices position family members to lead and participate in decision making, in partnership with the statutory agency, for children and young people involved in the child welfare system. This paper will review the scant literature about children's participation in FGCs and offers new perspectives on their experiences with this approach.

Method

Data from this study were derived from a U.S.-based federally-funded project that measured the implementation, outcome, and costs of FGC implementation with an in-home services child welfare population in a large urban jurisdiction. The primary goal of this study was to assess the effectiveness of FGC in preventing out-of-home placement for youth receiving in-home services, in contrast to much of the extant literature which has focused on utilization of FGC for children who are already in placement. A key focus of the process evaluation was assessing FGC fidelity over the life of the project. As such, one component of the evaluation was the collection of fidelity surveys which were administered during FGCs to all participants on a voluntary basis.

Results

In general, fewer children of interest agreed or strongly agreed to a range of questions about family leadership, inclusion and respect, preparedness for the meeting, and transparent planning compared with family/fictive kin and professionals.

Discussion and conclusions

The literature from US-based FGC projects is scant in understanding the rate of children's participation in FGCs and how they have experienced FGCs. While a few qualitative studies have measured children and young people's perspectives of how they experienced FGCs, this appears to be one of the first studies to use a systematic approach to capture children and young people's perspectives using a fidelity measurement tool and compare their responses to those of adult participants, both family/fictive kin and service professionals, alike. The findings suggest it is possible that FGC, though designed to be an inclusive and empowering decision-making practice for families involved in child welfare services, may not necessarily be perceived by children and youth in the same manner as it is for adult participants.

Developing an intervention for children with visual impairments and additional disabilities: Encouraging child and caregiver participation in educational decision-making

Dr. Eda Yeşilkaya (Gazi University)

Recent research investigating support strategies for children with disabilities emphasises the importance of listening to children and their caregivers and hearing their voices (Stalker & Connors, 2003). Involving children in the process of developing support strategies is important for meeting their needs. Additionally, participation of children and their caregivers in the process is important because this approach can enhance their involvement in social life, promote service improvement and promote children's rights (Sinclair & Franklin, 2000; Sinclair, 2004). However, there is limited information regarding participation of children with disabilities in the decision-making processes that affect them in areas of accessing education, health or care related services (McNeilly, Macdonald, & Kelly, 2015; Stalker & Connors, 2003). Accordingly, additional support should be provided to encourage child participation in decision-making if children have communication needs or complex health issues (McNeilly et al., 2015; Mitchell, Franklin, Greco, & Bell, 2009). This present research aimed to investigate the perspectives of children with visual impairments and additional disabilities, their caregivers, teachers and stakeholders on developing an intervention to support children with visual impairments and additional disabilities in their learning environments.

This present study is an exploratory qualitative research. An ethical approval for the present study was given by Queen's University Belfast. In total, 27 participants (5 children with visual impairments and additional disabilities, 4 caregivers, 11 teachers of children and 7 stakeholders) from Northern Ireland took part in this study. Children were from 2 different special schools and 1 mainstream school. The data was collected by using qualitative data collection methods including semi-structured interviews, direct participant observations (home and school environments) and field notes. The data collection took place in two stages, in total a period of eight months. In total 36 interviews and 18 observations were conducted across the study. All data was analysed by using thematic analysis technique. The overall project was completed in 2019.

The participants' experiences provided rich data about their perspectives, concerns and expectations. The main findings show that the children, the caregivers and teachers were experiencing challenges due to various factors such as fragmented support system, lack of knowledge on child health issues, complexity of child's conditions, assessment process, caregivers' heavy caring responsibilities and difficulties in accessing support services. Additionally, the findings reveal a power differential between children with visual impairments and those with additional disabilities, their caregivers, educators and service providers. Moreover, the findings demonstrate that communication related difficulties a child might have along with additional disabilities can lessen child participation in decision-making process. Given the findings revealed that the perspectives of children and caregivers can make an important contribution to expand the strategies while developing interventions for children or their caregivers. Therefore, there is a need for alternative strategies to promote the participation of children with visual impairments and additional disabilities and their caregivers in educational decision-making.

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Developing and validating an independent life skills assessment tool for young people in children's homes

Ms. Laura García-Alba (University of Oviedo), Ms. Federica Gullo (University of Oviedo), Mr. Álvaro Postigo (University of Oviedo), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo)

BACKGROUND

Transition to adulthood from care has been described in the literature as an accelerated and compressed process faced by these young people earlier, less supported, and with fewer skills than their peers. In order to promote their success in this process, there are programs available for practitioners in Spain, such as Program Planea, which is an innovative web-based tool for young people in children's homes to develop their independent living skills (Del Valle & García-Alba, in press). However, there was still a need to have a Spanish updated and adequate skill assessment tool, like the North-American widely used Ansell-Casey Life Skills Tool, that could complement the intervention with this kind of program.

Objective

Our study aimed to develop and validate an independent life skills self-reporting questionnaire (PLANEA Independent Life Skills Scale) that could serve as a reliable tool to assess perceived readiness for independent living in young people in care.

METHODS

Participants

The sample consisted of 1,098 young people aged 14-27 (M =17.69, SD = 2.25), of whom 60% were women, and included both young people from the general population (63%) and care-experienced young people, who were either living in group care homes or receiving aftercare services at the time of data collection.

Instruments

PLANEA Independent Life Skills Scale was developed with the aim of assessing the perceived knowledge of young people regarding important skills for everyday independent life, using a set of 39 Likert-type items with 4-point scales (1 = *"nothing"*; 2 = *"little"*; 3 = *"enough"*; 4 = *"a lot"*), according to the framework that Program Planea (Del Valle & García-Alba, in press) proposed.

In order to study evidence of validity in relation to other variables, additional instruments were used:

- PLANEA-T: an 8-item scale that measures the degree of autonomy of young people when engaging in doing real daily life activities and tasks
- General Self-Efficacy scale (Sanjuán et al., 2000)
- Autonomy in the Transition to Adulthood (EDATVA) scale (Romero et al., 2020)

Procedure & Data Analysis

The instruments were applied through paper and pencil (n = 81) and via the Internet (n= 1,017) to the participants, which had already been explained about the purposes and characteristics of the study and voluntarily consented to take part, being assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to study the dimensionality of the instrument, followed by descriptive statistics and DIF of the final items. Evidence of validity in relation to other variables and the discriminative capacity of the instrument were also studied.

RESULTS

The study of the dimensionality of the instrument revealed three first-order factors (Self-Care and Wellbeing, Daily Arrangements and Organizational Skills and Employment and Accommodation) and a second-order factor as a total score (Independent Life Skills). It was also possible to develop an additional 9-item short version

(PLANEA-9). All of them showed excellent reliability of the test scores (α = .86 - .94) and adequate psychometric properties. Scores across all scales and subscales were positively correlated to the studied variables (self-efficacy and autonomy in transition) and the discriminative capacity of the instrument was confirmed.

CONCLUSIONS

PLANEA Independent Life Skills scale points to be a reliable, valid tool to measure perceived independent living skills in young populations, being especially useful in childcare contexts. This is the first tool developed specifically for the Spanish context and its further use and study will have to address its adequacy both for research and intervention purposes.

Developing solutions to support the educational attainment of youth in residential care: controversies and youth's voice

Prof. Elodie Marion (mon)

Both the poor educational attainment of youth in out-of-home care and its consequences have been well documented in recent years. It has also been demonstrated that multidimensional issues are associated with educational attainment (e.g. youth aspirations, school engagement and motivation, support, and high expectations, school change and high rate of school absences). Collaboration between professional partners has been suggested as a solution both to address these complex issues and develop responses.**Objective**. Our research objective is to understand the development of collaboration in relation to the multidimensional issues associated with educational attainment of youth in residential care. Specifically, our goal is to promote understanding of what contributes to or prevents the development of solutions, considered part of the collaboration process. **Method.**To fulfill this objective, we mobilized Actor-network theory. The study employs a qualitative case study and data collection techniques include 24 semi-structured interviews with teachers, youth worker, social workers, managers and youth, as well as the review of 103 additional documents covering a ten years period. Our data analysis was based on the steps of process analysis. **Results**. Our findings shed light on the development of cross-sectoral collaboration and the creation of solutions to address the multidimensional issues associated with educational achievement of youth in residential care. We also give critical insights into differences between adult and children's views on the issues related to educational achievement. Firstly, our results provide an understanding of how actors, such as youth, teachers, youth workers, and managers, define the problems and manage to make them visible (or not) to increase engagement in the issues. We found that only a limited number of issues were successfully formalized. Indeed, if spaces such as steering and joint committees allowed some issues to be formalized, some actors had a limited capacity to interest others in the issues they considered important, for example the youth and the professionals who have no role in these formal spaces. That being said, it appears, that issues brought in formal spaces do not reflect the needs of the youth (e.g. remaining in their school), rather they reflect the interests of the professional actors. Secondly, we have identified multiple controversies that prevent the development of a collaborative approach to generating solutions around issues related to educational attainment. For example, our results shows different perspectives about school commitment, such as that of young people, teachers, youth worker and managers. We found that youth refusal to go to school is frequently viewed as a decision a youth takes freely, almost with full knowledge of the facts, therefore youth workers believed that they have no power. In parallel, youth in our study associated their lack of school commitment to components of residential care placement organization. We therefore found that how the lack of school commitment is explained differs depending on the person who's being asked and that this type of controversies needs to be addressed. **Conclusions**. This study helps clarify what needs to be done to support the educational success of youth while in residential care. Our study also demonstrated that in its current state, the structure of residential care and of the schooling provided during this type of placement, does not seem to support educational achievement. The results presented contribute to explaining why, despite the efforts of multidisciplinary teams and significant service provisions, academic difficulties persist, and the educational achievement of these young people remains far behind average. In conclusion, our results highlights the fact that youth's voice are not considered and that their preferences and needs need to be at the heart of discussion.

Development of an internet-based prevention of (re-)victimization for youth-in-care and care leavers (EMPOWER YOUTH): A consensus-based participative approach

Dr. Betteke van Noort (MSB Medical School Berlin, Department of Psychology), Dr. Laurence Reuter (MSB Medical School Berlin, Department of Psychology), Ms. Antonia Brühl (Universität Bremen, Department of Psychology Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy), Prof. Nina Heinrichs (Universität Bremen, Department of Psychology Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy), Prof. Birgit Wagner (MSB Medical School Berlin, Department of Psychology)

Objective. Given the increased likelihood for youth-in-care and care leavers (Y-IC) to be (re-)victimized, there is a strong need to develop and implement a low-threshold intervention targeting the specific needs of this group. There are a variety of possible revictimization experiences, e.g., social exclusion, verbal abuse from peers and siblings, partner violence or other forms of sexual or physical abuse. For adolescents and young adults, internet-delivered interventions have a number of advantages compared to traditional face-to-face treatments. To ensure the translation of research into practice, a consensus-based participative approach was chosen for the development of such an internet-based intervention against re-victimization for Y-IC.

Methods. Three focus groups with Y-IC (N=18, Mage=18 years, 56% female) and four focus groups with professional experts (N=16, 69% female) were conducted. Transcripts were analyzed using qualitative content analysis according to Mayring. General themes for the focus groups were victimization experiences, intervention contents, modes of delivery and ways to ensure compliance.

Results. The qualitative analyses revealed a wide range of victimization experiences, both face-to-face as well as on social media or online group chats. The importance of avoiding stigmatization of Y-IC was frequently mentioned. A flexibility in delivery, such as the adaptability to various devices, was often named. A mix of modes of delivery was preferred, such as video, audio, quiz elements. Moreover, the option of interaction with peers or psychologists was frequently stated. Finally, time efficiency of the intervention was emphasized.

Conclusions. Overall, the idea of an internet-based intervention for Y-IC was well-received as long as stigmatization would be avoided. A wide range of topics were found to be relevant with a focus on social interaction, risk perception and behavior. Based on these findings, the online-intervention “EMPOWER YOUTH” was developed and its six interactive modules will be presented.

Development of an investment case for sustainable community based foster care in Jordan

Dr. Lisa Holmes (Rees Centre), Dr. Rawan W. Ibrahim (German Jordanian University), Dr. Ellie Suh (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Prof. Sigrid James (University of Kassel)

Objectives

Jordan has had a long-standing commitment to improving conditions for children in need of care and protection. This commitment is reflected in signing of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and is also reflected in the development of numerous initiatives on multiple levels including child welfare policy and practice. The latest being the new Juvenile Law (2014), and the development of the first formal foster care program in the region. Even with these commendable milestones, there remains to be an over-reliance on residential care for children. To inform and support the investment in foster care, UNICEF commissioned research with two overarching objectives: to develop an investment case that promotes and strengthens the provision of sustainable community based foster care as an alternative to institutional care through evidence and appropriate economic analysis and to provide clear and actionable policy recommendations to enable the expansion of foster care in Jordan. Within the context of this study the term investment is used to encompass moral and societal investment, as well as financial.

Methods

To meet these objectives, the study included the estimation of the current costs (both unit and overall costs) of providing care services for children deprived of parental care in Jordan. As an integral part of this study we trialled the adaptation of a conceptual framework for assessing the costs of child welfare systems from the English context (Ward, Holmes and Soper, 2008). This multi-faceted study comprised a range of methods including an in-depth time use study to examine current practice, which then informed the development of an investment case. The time use study comprised a documentary analysis in addition to interviews with key informants (n=12), focus groups with child welfare workers (n=12) and foster carers (n=35) and a follow-up survey with child welfare workers (n=22). Detailed budgetary and financial information was provided by the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development.

Results

Our findings indicate that there is an ongoing commitment both at a ministerial and local level to develop community based foster care in Jordan, although the implementation is impeded by an interplay of structural and financial factors within the context of a developing economy. These factors can be broadly categorised as: human resource limitations; logistical and resource limitations, such as transportation, computers and internet access and a lack of underpinning infrastructure to build capacity within the current system. Our calculation of the costs of different types of placements highlight that foster care placements are substantially lower cost than residential placements. Furthermore, this substantial difference remains even when based on best practice, increased stipend payments to foster carers and a financial investment in the necessary infrastructure.

Conclusion

The findings from this study contribute to the wider debates and development of an evidence base of the longer term societal, moral and financial benefits of investing in good quality community based foster care as a viable alternative to residential care. In this session we will also explore the applicability and transferability of the study design, methods and findings for other emerging and developing economies.

Disciplinary Evidence in Norwegian Care Order Cases

Mr. Audun Gabriel Løvlie (University of Bergen)

Expert knowledge plays a central role in decision-making, informing judiciaries on vital matters. However, expert knowledge is also criticised for being opaque, esoteric, and characterised by being entrusted a large degree of authority (Molander et al., 2012; Moore, 2017; Turner, 1989, 2001; Ward, 2017). This constitutes a dilemma for decision-makers in care order cases when they need and apply evidence (Rose, 1999; Rose & Valverde, 1998; Ward, 2017). The aim of this paper is to identify and analyse decision-makers' use of evidence from different professions, referred to in this paper as *disciplinary knowledge or evidence.* Focus is on the application and role of disciplinary evidence in care order decisions relating to cases of violence in the family. The purpose is to expand our understanding of how legal decision-makers evaluate and use disciplinary evidence (Am 2013; Robertson and Broadhurst 2019; Ward 2012), by analysing the role of disciplinary evidence in care order proceedings of alleged family violence. Violence and its harmful effects on children are recognised as a central concern for practitioners and decision-makers. Cases of this type represent fertile grounds for investigating assessments of and decisions made in the best interests of the child. The paper explores the following question: How is disciplinary evidence assessed, annexed, deferred to, rejected, and how is it applied in practice by county social welfare board decision-makers as expressed in written care order decisions?

This study of practice as expressed in written decisions, provides new insights on issues related to decision-makers' expectations of deference to the epistemic authority of disciplinary evidence. By critically examining the decision-makers' use of disciplinary evidence the study expands our understanding on the maintenance of accountability and legitimacy in decision-making practices in a field of highly normative contention and friction, with regards to the question what is in the child's best interest.

The data material consists of all publicly available care order decisions by the Norwegian County Social Welfare Board involving violence for the years 2016 and 2017 (N=104). This analysis of practise and legislation as represented in written decisions, provides interesting results pertaining to issues relating to decision-makers' appraisal when assessing and applying expert evidence. By critically examining the written decisions' reliance on and assessments of disciplinary evidence, the paper provides insights on the practices of decision-makers as they decide the child's best interest.

The findings contextualise the Norwegian legal decision-makers' adherence to and application of disciplinary evidence when justifying in care order decisions.

Disclosing child maltreatment in foster care: What oral history interviews with adult survivors tell us

Prof. Hans Grietens (KU Leuven)

Objectives:

As part of a research project, commissioned by the Dutch Committee for the Study on Institutional Abuse of children and youth between 1945 and 2018, we analysed narratives of disclosure in adult survivors of child maltreatment in foster families. Following recent literature, disclosure of child maltreatment is considered a life-long process which unfolds in a permanent dialogue between survivors and their environment. Inner barriers as well as external circumstances may hamper this process. Little is known about the disclosure of child maltreatment in foster care, nor about the dynamics hampering or facilitating it, and therefore this study may add to our understanding of this issue. In addition to the analysis of disclosure narratives, we examined the meanings publicly reporting non-recent child maltreatment in the context of a national inquiry may have to survivors.

Methods:

We conducted oral history interviews with 34 survivors of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) and neglect (different types) in foster families, 26 women and 8 men. Participants were aged between 22 and 77 years. We used a narrative interview format with open questions focusing on three topics the Committee asked us to address: the nature of maltreatment in foster families, how maltreatment could happen and the impact it had on survivors during childhood and adulthood. The interviews lasted between one and four hours. They were held at a location chosen by the participants. All interviews were tape-recorded. After the interviews were transcribed, we performed a stepwise analysis, following principles of reflexive case-by-case thematic coding. First, we marked all fragments in which participants were telling about the disclosure of maltreatment in foster families during childhood or adulthood, including disclosure in the public space by reporting to the Committee. Next, we inductively coded these fragments per interview and grouped codes referring to similar meanings into clusters. Finally, after having thematically clustered each participant's reconstruction of the disclosure process, we searched for common patterns across cases.

Results:

Although participants narrated their histories of disclosure in unique ways, several commonalities across stories could be identified. During childhood it was extremely difficult to disclose maltreatment, in particular for those participants who were placed out-of-home before 1995. Inner barriers for disclosure were high levels of anxiety, self-blame, low self-esteem, ignorance and 'normalization' of the violence. External factors that contributed to non-disclosure or delays in disclosure were among other segregation and silencing of foster children, high social status of foster parents, stigmatization and marginalization of foster children, lack of contacts with birth parents, guardians and foster care workers, and disbelief among professionals in services and schools. Disclosing as adult the maltreatment that had occurred in the foster family was also very difficult for most participants. Inner barriers continued to hamper story-telling and many participants still struggled with the traumas of their childhood, long after they had left care. Self-silencing and partial disclosure helped some of them to survive or protect their beloved ones. Some participants were further silenced by professionals and had to wait for decades to find the right help and start processing their past. Finally, participants reported multiple reasons for disclosing in the public space. They reported to the Committee and participated in our study to witness and raise awareness, continue healing, prevent maltreatment of foster children in the future, rehabilitate their birth parents or find justice.

Discretionary reasoning in child protection

Dr. Jenny Krutzinna (University of Bergen), Dr. Katre Luhamaa (University of Tartu), Prof. Marit Skivenes (University of Bergen)

This paper discusses the structural dimensions of discretion in child protection decision making. The decision-makers in child protection systems have been delegated authority to exercise discretion, and discretion is in Dworkin's words, *"at home in only one sort of context: when someone is in general charged with making a decision subject to standards set by a particular authority"* (Dworkin, 1967, p. 32). The discretionary nature of child protection decisions is often seen when legitimacy of interventions, or lack of interventions, by front-line staff or the court is harshly criticized in the media. The general challenge for all discretionary decision-making is that it is difficult to ensure that similar cases are treated in the same way (Dworkin, 1967; Hawkins, 2002; Molander, Grimen, & Eriksen, 2012) and this challenge is very much present in child protection decisions. If similar cases are treated differently, this implies that children in need of protection may or may not receive help, and that children and families may or may not experience unnecessary intrusions by the state, all depending on the arbitrariness of which professional they meet. Two perspectives have dominated the literature on discretion in child protection and more generally in street-level bureaucracy. One is top down, defining discretion as delegated authority to execute and implement government policy. The other is bottom up, emphasising the professional's freedom to make choices in the best interests of service users (Evans, 2010). The exercise of discretion is thus seen as the act of a "state agent" or a "citizen agent", as Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) describe it. A core problem is that when decision-makers differ in their exercise of discretion in similar cases, it violates the principles of the rule of law, democratic control and influence, as well as the legitimacy and quality of the decisions. The instructions and the structural guidelines that governments make to ensure and guide frontline staff and the judiciary in their decision-making differ across systems. An example of this is shown in a study of child-protection systems that finds that the U.S. and England have set much stricter regulations (or 'standards' in Dworkin's words) for the use of discretion by decision-makers in care-order preparations than Norway and Finland have (Berrick et al., 2015a). The type of discretion that is delegated may depend on the type of child protection systems in place. Decision-makers may have different degrees of power and discretionary authority. Dworkin (1967) distinguishes between weak and strong discretion. Weak discretion relates to having some authority to use judgement; for example, as when the English Children Act instructs what aspects are deemed relevant, and the judges can decide how they are considered (cf. Archard & Skivenes, 2009). Strong discretion concerns decisions that are not "*bound by any standards set by an authority*" (p. 33), or 'khadi discretion' as Schneider (1992) labels it. In this paper we examine the child protection legislation in 44 high income countries to identify if and how the principle of the child's best interests or welfare provides guidance and instructions to decision-makers in how to determine a child's interests. This analysis provides us, first, with material to gain insight into the material content of the principle in child protection situations. Second, to develop the conceptual understanding of discretion and the discretionary structures that governments use to restrict and steer decision-makers. The aim is to expand the dichotomous approach of weak and strong discretion that often seems to be dominating the field.

Educating refugee children in Iran

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Iran is in the top ten countries that host the most refugees, including children, internationally. Refugees do have rights, one of which is the right to education. In this study, we exam the issue of educating refugee children in Iran. Having collected policies and laws from the past forty years, we engage in critical policy analysis of existing laws to reveal policy discourses over time and identify existing gaps. While Iranian laws have changed over the years in line with other national policy positions—including the introduction of laws addressing education and registration—gaps remain in the fields of the mandatory education of all refugee children and their legal guarantees, the legal solution to the cost of education and living, the flexibility of the rules for the education of refugee children and the consideration of cultural differences can be considered in the law and the need for improvement regarding these is clear.

Education of unaccompanied refugee minors in high-income countries: A systematic mixed-methods review of risk and resilience factors

Mx. Yousef Aleghfeli (oxf)

Objectives: There exists extensive evidence for the mental health resilience of unaccompanied refugee minors (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012; Höhne, van der Meer, Kamp-Becker, & Christiansen, 2020; Mitra & Hodes, 2019; O'Higgins, Ott, & Shea, 2018). However, little evidence exists on how these students display resilience through educational outcomes and educational trajectories. The aim of this study is to investigate what student-level and school-level resilience factors enable unaccompanied refugee minors in high-income countries to exhibit positive educational outcomes.

Methods: A mixed-methods review was conducted to identify quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods studies on the educational outcomes of unaccompanied refugee minor in high-income countries. In preparation of this review, the authors followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) criteria (Shamseer et al., 2015). The review uses a concurrent parallel design where quantitative and qualitative data is extracted and transformed from the included studies, analyzed separately, then synthesized together for interpretation (Nye, Melendez-Torres, & Bonell, 2016). The review also uses a meta-ethnographic approach, characterized by line-of-argument synthesis and third order interpretation (Noblit & Hare, 1988; Nye et al., 2016). The full protocol for this review was registered on the International Database of Education Systematic Reviews (IDESR) in February 2021 under IDESR000002. First, a search strategy was conducted in eleven bibliographic databases that returned 4,351 studies, followed by dual-reviewer blind screening (using Rayyan QCRI), to identify the final studies. Second, thematic content analysis and intercoder reliability (using NVivo) was performed to identify elements influencing educational resilience in unaccompanied refugee minors. These elements were classified using a socio-ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986).

Population: The review includes in scope all research on all unaccompanied refugee minors who arrived at the ages of 0-18 to a high-income country (CRC, 2005; World Bank, 2020). Accordingly, the review only includes studies where the population of study is wholly or partially current or former unaccompanied refugee minors. In addition, this study includes research on the perspective of unaccompanied refugee minors' immediate ecosystem, such as foster parents, teachers, school staff, and social workers who have given their perspective on the resilience of the children they cared for.

Outcomes: The review looks only at educational outcomes. As such, the review includes studies that used at least one educational outcome. Accepted educational outcomes include: 1) educational attainment (e.g. graduation rates, retention rates); 2) academic competency (e.g. test scores, exam results, grade point averages); 3) language and literacy (e.g. first language acquisition, second language acquisition, reading levels, writing levels); 4) school enrollment (e.g. enrollment, disenrollment, dropping out); and, 5) school attendance (e.g. attendance rates, absenteeism, skipping school).

Conclusion: Eighteen articles were included in the review, addressing 20 elements identified as a risk factor, a resilience factor or both and were related to four ecological levels: student (n=6), family (n=4), school (n=6) and community (n=4). Such findings can be used to inform the development and elaboration of evidence-based educational and school-based interventions that are cognizant of unaccompanied refugee minors' social-ecological context.

Educational experiences of children in out-of-home care: A Delphi study

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Abstract: Children in out of home care (OOHC) experience a myriad of school-related challenges, including, but not limited to, poorer academic outcomes, higher rates of school dropout, greater grade retention, and higher rates of school exclusion (e.g. suspension and expulsion) compared to children not in care (Brownell et al., 2015; Trout et al., 2008). Although these challenges are well-documented, limited research has investigated the academic and social-emotional strengths and challenges of young people in OOHC from the perspective of people with lived experience of OOHC, and professionals and caregivers who work with children in care.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the educational experiences of children in OOHC from the perspective of caregivers, professionals/teachers and people with lived experience of OOHC. The methodology employed for this study was a Delphi methodology, including both closed and open-ended questions delivered to participants using an online survey. People with lived experience of OOHC were also asked to collaborate with the research team on the final themes generated from the thematic analysis of the open-ended survey questions. The research questions for this study included:

1. What are the educational needs of children in OOHC, including social, emotional, learning and behaviour aspects?
2. What are the strengths and limitations of current educational programs and policies available for children in OOHC?
3. What policy and program reforms are needed to enhance educational experiences of children in OOHC?

Participants completed a self-report questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions about the educational strengths and challenges of children in OOHC, supports and programs available for children in OOHC, the specific experiences of these children in relation to their social, emotional, behavioural and learning outcomes at school, and questions around what more needs to be done by services, programs and through policy to respond to these children's educational needs.

Participants, including 31 professionals/educators, 12 people with lived experience of OOHC, and 17 carers, reported on the strengths of children in OOHC, including their capacity to determine their own educational needs, their resilience and ability to adapt to different educational settings, and their persistence despite experiences of adversity and trauma. Participants reported that experiences of trauma and disadvantage, unstable home placements and schooling, and stigma and low expectations from teachers limit OOHC students' educational success. Participants recommended programs to increase teachers' awareness of the challenges and strengths of children in OOHC, knowledge of individualised learning plans for children in OOHC, and understanding about how to support children in OOHC.

Results will be discussed within the context of interventions to promote wellbeing among children in OOHC, including interventions which adopt a strengths-based, positive psychology philosophy, a humanistic psychology approach, and principles of trauma-informed care. The three lived experience consultants employed to assist with the thematic analysis suggested that the experiences articulated by participants in this study are representative of the educational experiences of youth in OOHC. The lived experience consultants noted gaps between service awareness and use among youth in OOHC, the lack of available mental health services for youth

in OOHC, the disconnect between OOHC policy and the experiences of young people in care, and the ongoing challenges and lack of services for care leavers.

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Educational outcomes and child centered foster care: Perspectives of children and carers

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Background

Research into the education of children and young people (CYP) in care reveals consistent findings evidencing an attainment gap for CYP in care relative to their peers. For instance, in Australia CYP in care recorded 13-39 points less across assessments compared to all school students (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015). With respect to high school completion only 45% of those in care achieve this milestone against 77% in the general student population (Harvey et al.,2015). Internationally, there is policy attention being paid to the education of children in care to ensure they achieve optimal educational and psychosocial life outcomes. Important to enhancing the educational achievement of children in care are support, stability of environment, teaching resources and the recognition by all stakeholders - foster carers, social workers and statutory authorities that education is paramount to a child's future wellbeing. This presentation will highlight the perspectives of children, carers and teachers on the fostering experience with particular focus on educational outcomes drawing on a research study of children in long-term care.

Context and Methodology

The research used a mixed method, prospective longitudinal, repeated measures, multi informant design. The site of the research is a large non-government child welfare service provider. The sample for this study included 59 children representing both genders and a diversity of ages, entry paths and trajectories. As part of the study children were assessed by teachers and carers for academic competencies and emotional and behavioural functioning using the Achenbach CBCL and its companion the Teacher Report Form. Analyses focused on the educational experience and outcomes for this cohort drawing on teacher and carer assessments at two points in the study. This is complemented by excerpts from the qualitative data from CYP and their carers.

Results

Findings indicated a high level of externalising and internalising problems in initial assessments and demonstrated gains in terms of improved scores in academic performance and adaptive functioning at subsequent assessments. A notable finding was the similarity in gains in specific domains between the care sample and the control group in later assessments following a 2-year spell of stable care.

The qualitative data from CYP highlights perceptions of their engagement with school, confidence in their own ability to perform at school, the perceived impact of school changes, their perceptions of carer, teacher and peer support, and the presence or absence of friends they could turn to and perceived obstacles to doing well at school, their worries and fears, and their personal aspirations and educational and career goals. Corresponding views from carers on similar themes emerged from the study.

Conclusion

The voices of children added important insights bringing into the study their lived experience. The knowledge gained from capturing children's voices about their experiences in care, their schooling, and of being on the receiving end of interventions emphasise the value of direct communication with children and facilitating their agency and participation underlining the importance of listening to children and respecting their capacity and right to self-expression .

Viewing these findings from the lens of an ecological systems framework (Bronfenbrenner 1979) the implications for practice at the micro, meso and macro levels will be discussed

emphasizing the need for a coordinated strategy to improve placement continuity and proactive professional and organizational support with respect to the educational needs of children in care.

Educational pathways for young care leavers with mental health problems – Qualitative and quantitative analysis of Danish Care leavers

Mrs. Mette Lausten (VIVE - The Danish Center for Social Science Research), Mrs. Tea Torbenfeldt Bengtsson (VIVE - The Danish Center for Social Science Research)

Background: Long-term outcomes are often shown to be considerably poorer for care leavers than for young people in general (Gypen et al., 2017; Kääriälä and Hiilamo, 2017). A substantial international literature has reported that the educational pathways of care leavers are characterized by disruption and poor educational outcomes, when compared with the majority population peers (e.g. Brady & Gilligan, 2019; Hanrahan et al., 2020). While many researchers focus on the specific group of care leavers who achieve educational 'success' (e.g. Hanrahan et al., 2020; Harrison, 2020; Jackson & Cameron, 2012) analyses of educational pathways for the large group of care leavers struggling with mental health problems are less scrutinised.

Purpose: Based on Danish mixed-method longitudinal data the purpose of this paper is to examine the educational pathways of young care leavers (age 24) with mental health problems. Despite significant findings demonstrating both higher rates of mental health problems and lower rates of educational achievements for young care leavers, little is known about how mental health problems influence educational pathways and are related to educational experiences. Therefore, we address the question: How does mental health problems influence young care leavers' educational pathways and how can this influence be understood.

Methods: We use an embedded one-phase mixed method design (Creswell & Clark, 2007) on qualitative and quantitative data from the Danish Longitudinal Study of Children in Care born in 1995 – (DALSC-CIC) that consist of interviews, questionnaires, and administrative data on placements, risk behaviours, and pathways through the educational system from age 15 to age 24.

Preliminary results: Mental health disorders play a significant role in how care leavers face the educational pathway. Two out of three care leavers with mental health problems (72 %) either do not enter the educational system or do experience to drop out of the system at least once. The young people's own experience is that either they give up as no-one cares about their educational level or they have to fight a lonesome battle for themselves to stay in education. Consequently, this specifically vulnerable group of young persons are much more likely to experience disrupted educational pathways repeatedly in and out of the educational system, experiencing a kind of yo-yo pathway as described in Jackson & Cameron, 2012.

It appears as if the Danish social welfare system cannot successfully compensate the young care leavers for their disadvantageous backgrounds and that the health system cannot offer successful psychiatric treatment to keep the care leavers on a straight track. These alarming results calls for attention from those working with care leavers, but also policymakers, to rethink how to help these adolescents better overcome the many accumulated adversities of being in the intersection of the social welfare system and the mental health system but no way near the educational system.

Effective elements of intensive family interventions: Who is involved and what works? (chair: Visscher) - Elements of professional action in intensive family support: The perceptions of children (paper)

Prof. David Lätsch (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family), Ms. Hirmete Hasani (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family), Ms. Julia Quehenberger (ZHAW)

Chair/contact: Loraine Visscher

Introduction: A particular form of intensive family services called "social-pedagogical family support" (in short, SPF) has steadily gained importance in the Swiss child welfare system for more than two decades. The practice is increasingly seen by decision-makers in child welfare as a virtual do-all for all kinds of family problems that are seen as necessitating interventions of the state. The problems addressed range from issues of child protection in the narrower sense (with suspected or substantiated child maltreatment being the reason for intervening) to phenomena such as families struggling with the school absentism of a child or caregivers apparently not meeting a child's special education needs. Whereas this form of family support has a long history in practice, there is little empirical research on how social workers actually "do SPF" or how these elements of professional action are perceived and interpreted by parents and children. There is a particular lack of attention on the *children's* perspective. As part of an ongoing quasi-experimental study on the effectiveness of SPF in comparison with other interventions targeting families in need, we are investigating (i) what kinds of activities (involving children and/or caregivers) professionals, caregivers and children report as common elements of SPF, (ii) where and to what extent the perceptions of children differ from those of the two adult groups, (iii) what characteristics on the individual, case, and agency level predict both the frequencies with which elements are reported and differences in perception between children and adults.

Methods: Workers, caregivers and children (age 10 years or over) filled in questionnaires at four points in time, at the start of the intervention (T0) and 2 months (T1), 9 months (T2) and 18 months (T3) after that, with the last measurement usually being a follow-up several months after the intervention had ended. To collect data on perceived elements, we used a taxonomy that modifies earlier approaches in the literature by including several items more attuned to theoretical assumptions about core principles specific to the SPF variety of family support.

Results: Analysis is ongoing. Results will be presented with regard to T0 and T1 measurements, preliminary results will include T2.

Conclusions: While particular conclusions naturally depend on findings, we expect our study to expand current knowledge on elements of intensive family support by providing the critical perspective of the child. These insights may help to identify areas of improvement in involving children.

Effective elements of intensive family interventions: Who is involved and what works? - Components of parent training and home visiting programs for child maltreatment

Mrs. Jeanne Gubbels (University of Amsterdam), Dr. Claudia Van der Put (University of Amsterdam), Dr. Mark Assink (University of Amsterdam), Prof. Geert Jan Stams (University of Amsterdam)

Child maltreatment is a major problem that affects many children around the world. Given it's great individual and social impact, it is crucial to prevent child maltreatment. Both parent training programs and home visiting programs are widely endorsed for preventing or reducing child maltreatment. However, previous review studies show small effects of both parent training programs (e.g., Chen & Chan, 2016) and home visiting programs (e.g. Filene et al., 2013) on child maltreatment. Why that is, remains to be explored. To better understand the effectiveness of parent training and home visiting programs aiming to prevent or reduce child abuse, it is important to examine whether and how specific intervention components influence program effectiveness. Therefore, two studies were conducted aiming to meta-analytically examine what specific program components and techniques contribute to the effect of parent training programs (study one) and home visiting programs (study two) and what makes a difference in the prevention of child maltreatment.

For the *parent training study*(Gubbels et al., 2019), the literature search yielded 51 studies, reporting on 185 effect sizes, examining the effects of parent training programs for preventing or reducing child abuse. We found an overall effect of d= 0.42, which was quite large compared to the results from previous review studies. Several program components significantly moderated the overall effect. However, all of these components somewhat reduced the effect of parent training programs. Smaller effect sizes were found for programs with a focus on improving personal skills of parents (d = 0.373 versus d = 0.816), improving parental problem solving (d = 0.363 versus d = 0.512) and stimulating prosocial behavior/discourage antisocial behavior of children (d = 0.361 versus d = 0.527). Significant smaller effects were also found for programs using practice and rehearsal as a delivery technique (d = 0.327 versus d = 0.511).

For the *home visiting study*(Gubbels et al., 2021), a literature search yielded 77 studies examining the effectiveness of home visiting programs, producing 174 effect sizes. In total, 35 different program components and delivery techniques were coded. A small but significant overall effect was found (d = 0.14). Programs that focused on improving parental expectations of the child or parenthood in general (d = 0.308 versus d = 0.112), programs targeting parental responsiveness or sensitivity to a child's needs (d = 0.238 versus d = 0.064), and programs using video-based feedback (d = 0.397 versus d = 0.124) yielded relatively larger effects. Providing practical and instrumental assistance was negatively associated with program effectiveness (d = 0.044 versus d = 0.168). Further, program effects were larger when percentages of non-Caucasians/non-Whites in samples and follow-up durations increased.

The findings of both of these studies and their theoretical and practical implications will be discussed.

Effective elements of intensive family interventions: Who is involved and what works? - Elements of care that matter: perspectives of families with multiple problems

Ms. Loraine Visscher (University Medical Center Groningen; University of Groningen), Dr. Danielle Jansen (University Medical Center Groningen; University of Groningen), Prof. Ron Scholte (Radboud University Nijmegen; Tilburg University; de Viersprong), Prof. Tom van Yperen (University of Groningen), Dr. Els Evenboer (University Medical Center Groningen; Windesheim University of Applied Sciences), Prof. Menno Reijneveld (University Medical Center Groningen; University of Groningen)

Introduction: Given the severe and persistent problems of FMP, there is a need for effective interventions and for an understanding of which elements of these interventions lead to positive change within these families. Knowledge on the effectiveness of interventions for FMP as a total package increases, however little is known about which elements of these intervention packages are most pivotal for positive outcomes. To define essential elements of interventions for FMP, existing knowledge on the content should be complemented with personal perspectives of FMP on elements that matter. Unfortunately, knowledge is very scarce on the perspectives of FMP on interventions received, especially when it comes to the experienced relevance of specific elements that were provided to them. Interviewing FMP is a useful way to gain more in-depth knowledge on their perspectives on essential elements. Therefore, in this study we explored the views of parents and children in FMP regarding helpful and less helpful elements of various interventions.

Method: We selected eight interventions targeting FMP that are commonly used in the Netherlands and have been shown to yield at least moderate effect sizes (>0.5): Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), Intensive Family Treatment (IFT), Families First (FF), Family Central (FC), Parent Management Training Oregon (PMTO), Triple P 4-5 and 10 for the Future (10FF). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore perspectives of FMP on helpful and unhelpful elements of one of these interventions received. The sample consisted of 24 caregivers from which 6 families received IFT, nine received MST, 4 MDFT, 3 PMTO, 1 FF and one family received FC.

Results: Participants reported 11 elements that contribute to effectiveness of care, categorized under three main themes: the characteristics of the practitioner, the content of interventions and the structure of interventions. The perspectives of FMP show the following activities to be promising: routine reflection of the non-judgmental and positive approach of practitioners, more direct focus on children, focus on the underlying cause of behavior, activation of families' social and professional networks, and creation of more possibilities for long-term, flexible support.

Conclusion: The results of this study deepens our knowledge on effective elements of interventions for FMP and identifies important areas for improvement, from a family's point of view. Perspectives of FMP on the content and provision of care should be better embedded in interventions. Especially, since parents emphasized the importance of involving the child and that, interventions did not have sufficient long-term effects. Two recent studies on the content of these interventions have shown that they often focus on parents and that the duration of interventions is mostly fixed (Visscher et al., 2018; Visscher et al., 2019). Including perspectives of FMP more structurally within interventions may help to tailor care to their wishes and needs, which in turn can contribute to more positive outcomes.

Effective elements of intensive family interventions: Who is involved and what works? - Toward tailored care for families with multiple problems: A quasi-experimental study on effective elements of care

Ms. Loraine Visscher (University Medical Center Groningen; University of Groningen), Prof. Menno Reijneveld (University Medical Center Groningen; University of Groningen), Dr. Jana Knot-Dickscheit (University of Groningen), Prof. Tom van Yperen (University of Groningen), Prof. Ron Scholte (Radboud University Nijmegen; Tilburg University; de Viersprong), Dr. Els Evenboer (University Medical Center Groningen; Windesheim University of Applied Sciences), Dr. Danielle Jansen (University Medical Center Groningen; University of Groningen)

Introduction: Families with multiple problems (FMP) face severe, chronic and intertwined problems in different areas of life, such as parenting problems, psychosocial problems, health problems, social network problems, and problems in the domains of justice. Children raised in these families have a higher risk of developing behavioral and emotional problems and in addition, there is a high risk of neglect and child maltreatment. Several effective interventions have been developed for FMP, but knowledge is lacking as to which specific practice and program elements of these interventions deliver positive outcomes. We aimed to assess the effectiveness of practice and program elements (contents of and structure in which care is provided) for FMP in general, and for subgroups with child and/or parental psychiatric problems, intellectual disabilities or substance use. Evidence on the effectiveness of these elements may enhance selection of the best interventions for FMP or subgroups of FMP.

Methods: We performed a quasi-experimental study on the effectiveness of practice and program elements provided in attested FMP interventions. These interventions were: Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), Intensive Family Treatment (IFT), Families First (FF), Family Central (FC), Parent Management Training Oregon (PMTO), Triple P 4-5 and 10 for the Future (10FF). Practitioners providing these interventions reported on practice and program elements provided during the interventions. Using self-report questionnaires we measured child's internalizing and externalizing problems, parenting stress and social contacts at beginning, end and three months after conclusion of the intervention. We identified groups of families that received similar combinations of practice elements ("profiles") and calculated propensity scores. Next, we assessed how practice element profiles and program elements affected improvement in outcomes, and whether these effects were moderated by subgroup characteristics.

Results: We found three practice elements profiles (explorative/supportive, action-orientend and their combination), which were equally effective. Regarding program elements, effects were enhanced by more frequent telephone contact between visits, and more frequent intervision. Effectiveness of practice and program elements varied for specific FMP subgroups.

Conclusion: Variations in the content of care for FMP do not affect its effectiveness, but variations in the structure of the care do. This finding can help to further improve effective interventions, for example by tailoring these interventions to the needs of specific families.

Effects of the use of selective prevention on longitudinal links between parenting stress and child's negative emotionality

Dr. Ulrike Lux (German Youth Institute), Mrs. Susanne Marlene Ulrich (German Youth Institute), Prof. Sabine Walper (German Youth Institute), Dr. Christoph Liel (German Youth Institute)

Objectives: Numerous studies show links between parental stress and child temperament: While most findings suggest that a child's difficult temperament leads to greater parental stress (Oddi, Murdock, Vadnais, Bridgett & Gartstein, 2013), the opposite direction is also proven (Sheinkopf et al., 2006). In order to identify key target points in early childhood intervention, it is of particular interest whether and how selective interventions can change these links. Thus, the objective of this study was to examine, (1) whether parenting stress influences child's difficult temperament longitudinally and vice versa, and, (2) whether the use of early childhood intervention can modify the association between parenting stress and difficult temperament.

Method: Data was drawn from a subsample of N=903 families with infants and toddlers up to 48 months, which participated in the German KiD 0-3 national main study in 2015 (t1), a representative population-based study via pediatricians (during routine well-child visits), and could be followed up two years later (t2). Amongst other things, the self-administered questionnaire included information on various risk factors, experiences on parenthood (e.g. four subscales of the German version of the Parenting Stress Index: Tröster, 2010) and characteristics of the child (e.g. negative emotionality as a subdimension of child temperament: see Kübber, 2014). Participants also reported on knowledge and use of universal, selective and targeted prevention services since birth of the respective child at t1. An autoregressive cross-lagged panel design was used to analyze the association of parenting stress and the child's negative emotionality, including use of targeted prevention programs as moderator. The effect of targeted prevention programs on parenting stress and child's negative emotionality was tested using Propensity Score Matching (PSM).

Results: In the final analyses, 903 parents (mothers: 93.6 %, mean age: 33.3 years at t1) with children up to 48 months (female: 48.3 %, mean age: 13.1 months at t1) were included. The basic model had an excellent model fit. While parental stress proved to be more stable than the child's negative emotionality, only parenting stress at t1 affected the (perception of) child‘s negative emotionality at t2, the inverse association was not significant. When targeted prevention was included as moderator, the correlation disappeared among program users. With PSM, there was no direct effect of targeted program participation on parenting stress or child's negative emotionality. But a subsample of highly stressed parents at T1 who used targeted prevention at T1 reported less child's negative emotionality problems at T2 than parents who scored high in parenting stress but did not receive targeted prevention at T1.

Conclusions: Overall, results suggest that the spillover from parenting stress to child's negative emotionality may be modified by targeted prevention programs. The small subgroup of highly stressed parents may benefit the most from these programs. Findings are discussed with regard to the prevention paradox.

EMPOWERING RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE (RCC) COMPETENCIES THROUGH INTERPROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Dr. Eeva Timonen-Kallio (Turku University of Applied Sciences, Health and Well-Being), Prof. Sigrid James (University of Kassel, Department of Social Work and Social Welfare, Kassel, Germany), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo), Prof. Laura Formenti (University of Milano Bicocca), Dr. Alessandra Rigamonti (University Milano-Bicocca, Human Sciences for Education)

There are substantial concerns across Europe about the capability of residential child care (RCC) to help and support children and youth. For the insight to this matter the context and content of residential care were "mapped"in five European countries (Finland, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and Spain). The objective was to build a foundation for meaningful comparisons and deepened understanding of each system's inherent logic and challenges related to the provision of services for children, youth, and families.

The analysis highlighted areas of overlap and singularity, one particularity with regard to workforce professionalization. There is an increasing recognition of the need for upgrading the quality of RCCs by professionalizing the RCC practice. The question is howto improve the conformity around the core RCC practices? The practice is guided by various pedagogical and/or treatment philosophies with an indefinite set of pedagogic, therapeutic and rehabilitative approaches. There are mixed opinions in research on the influence of professionalization processes in RCC on workers' tasks and responsibilities with a defined statutory duty. The results of the mapping will be reflected in the context of (insufficient) training background and (in)stability of the RCC workforce.The quality and effectiveness of RCC intervention related to competencies and training background of the staff in different professional and child welfare systems will be discussed.

Empowerment and participation as a child safe standard: evidence and practice

Mr. Murray Davies (The Viewpoint Organisation Ltd)

Objectives

To share recommendations from child abuse inquiries that identify that children's participation in decisions affecting them is a key safety standard.

To show how the process of empowerment and participation supports the principles of Trauma Informed Care and safety from harm and re-traumatisation

To show how the use of digital technology and associated practice can enable young people who have experienced trauma to focus on the sensitive topics with less awkwardness or defensiveness.

To share research findings demonstrating that young people who are 'safe and settled' achieve improved wellbeing outcomes.

Method

Sharing key recommendations from child abuse inquiries undertaken in different countries that identify young people's participation in decisions affecting them is an important contributor to their safety in out of home care.

Sharing the primary principles of trauma-informed care, showing the importance of empowerment and how this is essential to facilitate genuine participation

Demonstrating how the use of digital technology, enabling young people to share information about their experiences and feelings, can provide a space where it is acceptable to encourage discussion about positive and not so positive aspects of life for the young people. The process removes any awkwardness about getting into this space and allows young people to focus on sensitive topics and concerns with less awkwardness or defensiveness.

Sharing findings based on young people's responses about their experiences and feelings in different jurisdictions that demonstrate that young people who are 'safe and settled' achieve improved wellbeing outcomes.

Results

Participants will have had an opportunity to consider the recommendations from child abuse inquiries that describe children's participation as a key child safe standard and understand how the application of Trauma Informed Care principles promotes safety from harm and re-traumatisation.

Participants will have had the opportunity to consider how the use of digital technology can promote empowerment and participation, and provide a space where it is possible to encourage discussion about positive and not so positive aspects of life

Participants will have had an opportunity to consider findings that demonstrate that young people who are 'safe and settled' achieve better outcomes.

Conclusion

Child abuse Inquiry recommendations showing how young people's participation in decision making improves their safety will have been shared, together with contribution of Trauma Informed Care principles to child safety. Participants will have had an opportunity to consider an approach to empowerment and participation using digital technology and the evidence from young people that the approach improves their wellbeing outcomes.

Engaging youth in evaluating a Housing First program for youth from government care

Dr. Maya Peled (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Annie Smith (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Stephanie Martin (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Katie Horton (McCreary Centre Society)

Objectives: Youth from government care (i.e., who have been involved in the child welfare system) are at greater risk of homelessness than youth who have never been in care (e.g., BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2018). It is therefore important to offer supports to help youth with government care experience to find housing and achieve housing stability. It is also important to include them in devising solutions to address youth homelessness.

This presentation focuses on an evaluation of a Housing First program in Greater Vancouver, Canada. The Housing First approach offers permanent and affordable housing, as quickly as possible, to individuals experiencing homelessness, and then provides the supportive services and connections they need to maintain housing stability.

The Housing First program in Greater Vancouver supported youth, aged 19 and older, who had transitioned out of government care and were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Youth with care experience were involved in developing a self-report survey for the evaluation, which helped to yield meaningful and useful results.

Method: Young people with government care experience took part in a workshop where they learned about survey development, and then co-created the evaluation survey for the Housing First program. The survey was part of a mixed-methods evaluation which also included a focus group with program participants, as well as interviews with program staff, landlords connected to the initiative, and representatives from other community agencies familiar with the initiative.

A total of 26 program participants completed a survey (54% females), which was representative of the number of youth in the program. Seven youth also took part in a focus group, and 11 staff members and other stakeholders participated in phone interviews.

Results: Findings indicated that all program participants had experienced precarious housing at some point, including most (73%) who had been street homeless. Forty percent were currently living with roommates, and evaluation participants discussed the importance of youth from care learning skills (e.g., conflict-resolution skills) that would help them live successfully with roommates.

Youth most commonly identified a housing subsidy as key to helping youth from care to find and maintain housing. They also identified the need for a stable source of income, supportive adults/workers, and knowledge of their tenancy rights and responsibilities.

Youth valued that they could stay in the program for as long as they needed and there was no age cut-off. Other program strengths identified by evaluation participants included the emphasis on relationship-building and a sense of community fostered by the program, and the provision of wrap-around supports.

Most youth identified improvements which they attributed to their involvement in the program. These included improvements in their housing situation (74%) and greater knowledge of their rental rights and responsibilities (76%), as well as improved social and emotional well-being (e.g., 67% reported better mental health). They also reported greater access to needed supports and services (86%), and improvements in their employment situation (79%) and education planning (63%). Most also reported enhanced skills relating to finding housing (71%), keeping their housing (76%), and communicating with landlords (76%).

Conclusion: Findings demonstrated that the program contributed to improvements in participants' housing stability, as well as in areas beyond housing which can help to support young people's stability and well-being into adulthood.

Youth's involvement in developing the evaluation survey helped them gain skills, and helped to ensure the data collected was meaningful and relevant to program participants and service providers.

Enlargement of placement stability in foster care: research ‘Why do foster parents stop?’

Ms. Stefanie Abrahamse (advisor at Netherlands Youth Institute), Ms. Maartje Gardeniers (Dutch Association of Foster Families), Ms. Harmke Bergenhenegouwen (Projectmanager at Nederlands Youth Institute), Ms. Germie van den Berg (senior advisor at Netherlands Youth Institute)

Introduction

Every child has a basic right and need to grow up in a safe home with a stable continuous relationship with at least one adult who is a trusted, committed parent figure. Unfortunately, actual practice in the foster care system shows that many foster children move repeatedly from home to home. Enhancing placement stability therefore has high priority.

Ten Dutch foster care providers participate in the action learning program ‘stability in foster care placement’. They do research, ask questions, listen to the voices of children, parents and foster parents, reflect and take actions to enlarge the placement stability. Part of this program was the research ‘Why do foster parents stop?’ An important issue given the importance of stability for the foster children and the shortage of foster parents.

Reseach ‘Why do foster parents stop?’

Some of the foster parents decide to stop foster parenting prematurely. In the Netherlands 14% of the foster parents take this decision. The research ‘Why do foster parents stop?’ provides insight into the reasons why they take this decision and how foster parents can be retained.

Method

542 stopped foster parents were involved in a questionnaire study and 20 of them participated in supplementary focus groups. The research questions were:

- Under what circumstances do foster parents stop?
- How do foster parents experience the termination of foster parenting and the accompanying care?
- What can be improved according to foster parents in prevention, guidance and aftercare?
- To what extent can foster parents who have stopped be retained?

Results

52 percent of the foster families surveyed say they have stopped due to problems in the care system including problems with youth protection, behavioral problems of the foster child or the impact the placement has on their family. Many of these foster parents were dissatisfied with the support from the foster care providers and with the aftercare after their decision to stop being a foster parent. They often express sadness, anger, grief and frustration around the termination. However, the vast majority of the foster parents who have stopped (72 percent) do not rule out their willingness to commit themselves again to vulnerable children in the future - through foster care or in some other way. The research shows that too little use is made of this potential, despite a shortage of foster parents.

In all phases of a foster care placement, more attention is needed to support foster parents. In the preparatory and matching phase, in the vulnerable the first years of foster parenting but also in the following phases with their own challenges. Good aftercare and guidance for stopped foster parents can ensure that they want to re-commit themselves as a foster parent. It is also important that the learning and training offer for foster parents is expanded and improved, including learning with and from other foster parents.

In the study, foster parents provide valuable tips and advice to all those involved in foster care - new foster parents, foster care providers, youth protection and municipalities. The recommendations have been included in the action learning program ‘stability in foster care placement’.

Conclusion

The fact that some of the foster parents stop prematurely has far-reaching consequences for foster children and children waiting for a suitable foster family. Through better support, recognition and appreciation of foster parents from the start and good aftercare after termination, more foster families can be retained. This is only possible on the basis of a joint responsibility that also includes municipalities.

Errors and Mistakes in Child Protection. International approaches and strategies to strengthen the perspective and rights of the child

Prof. Kay Biesel (University of Applied Sciences and Arts North Western Switzerland / School of Social Work), Prof. Tarja Pösö (Tampere University)

Topic

Based on a cross-national analysis of errors and mistakes in child protection, the symposium will present different approaches and strategies for strengthening the perspective and rights of the child in Europe. It illustrates what errors and mistakes affect children in child protection, what effects they have and how various European countries attempt to avoid and learn from them. It will help to understand why child protection fails and what can be done to reduce the impact of errors and mistakes in protecting children, focusing on their rights of being protected and involved.

List of contributions

(1) “Triggers and responses to errors and mistakes in child protection in Europe” (Kay Biesel & Tarja Pösö)
(2) “Child perspective errors in the Norwegian child protection system” (Øyvind Tefre)
(3) “Impacts of child abusive practices and fatal cases in child protection in Switzerland” (Clarissa Schär & Brigitte Müller)
(4) “Dysfunctions and their effects of children and young people in the French child protection system” (Helene Join-Lambert)
(5) “Dealing with errors and mistakes in the Dutch Child Protection” (Tom van Yperen)” (Tom van Yperen)

Errors and Mistakes in Child Protection. International approaches and strategies to strengthen the perspective and rights of the child - Child perspective errors in the Norwegian child protection system

Dr. Øyvind Tefre (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences), Prof. Marit Skivenes (University of Bergen)

The aim of this presentation is to examine why the Norwegian child protection system still struggles to implement children's right to participate, contained in the Child Welfare Act §§ 1-6 and 6-3, the Constitution § 104, and the UNCRC Article 12.

Children have the right to be involved, informed and heard, and their views shall be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. However, studies of children's participation in Norwegian child protection show the difficulties in realizing participation in practice, and expert-by-experience groups have been vocal about the need to improve children's participation in child protection.

We have reviewed audit reports by public regulatory agencies tasked with supervision of the child protection system during the years 2010-2019. Combined, the reports show a pattern over time where the child protection system all too frequently fails to involve children in casework and decision-making that directly affect their lives.

In seven of the eight reports we reviewed, auditors identified what we characterize as 'child perspective errors'. We organized these errors in four groups: 1) Failures to interview children at all. 2) Failure to document the child's view in case files. 3) Failure to facilitate interviews with children in ways that allow them to speak freely. 4) Failure to give children's view and/or interests due weight in decision-making.

The persistence of the same child perspective errors over time makes us question the value of learning provided by the system of audits. In our contribution, we discuss some possible explanations for why child perspective errors remain a problem in Norwegian child protection, as well as obstacles and possible ways to improve children's participation in practice.

Errors and Mistakes in Child Protection. International approaches and strategies to strengthen the perspective and rights of the child - Dealing with errors and mistakes in the Dutch Child Protection system

Prof. Tom van Yperen (University of Groningen), Dr. Kirti Zeijlmans (University of Groningen), Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen)

Over recent decades, a number of fatal cases in child protection made national headlines and had far-reaching consequences for the Dutch child protection system. The same causes of errors and mistakes have repeatedly been identified in these cases: lack of collaboration between professionals, poor exchange of information between organisations, and the challenges of detecting child abuse in complex cases. The Dutch child protection system seems to be faced with the challenge of finding a balance between the obligation of each individual professional to oversee the safety of the child and the shared responsibility of fragmented organisations to collaborate in order to really provide this safety net.

Two initiatives introduced by policy makers to improve collaboration between professionals and organisations have had only little impact: the Family Coach (a professional responsible for creating an overview of services and arranging an integrated care package for the family) and the Reference Index (a national electronic system to inform all professionals that are involved in a case which other professionals are also engaged). The limited effect of these initiatives are explained by their top-down character, imposing policy measures on practice, and their limited contribution to a true integration of care.

Also the development and introduction of decision support tools, for example instruments that help professionals to gather information that may be relevant or their decisions, and guidelines that tells them how to make these decisions, seem to have little impact. The reason may be that these instruments and guidelines fail to take into account the personal factors that play a role in decision making.

Other initiatives that focused on the bottom up development of professional methods to improve the cooperation with the families and to work in a systemic context seem to have more effect. Our study shows that the further development of these methods is promising, although they offer no guarantee that fatal cases can be avoided at all time. In other words, mistakes are unavoidable, but these methodes help to prevent them as much as possible.

Errors and Mistakes in Child Protection. International approaches and strategies to strengthen the perspective and rights of the child - Impacts of coercive measures in child welfare and fatal cases in child protection in Switzerland

Dr. Brigitte Müller (FHNW School of Social Work), Mrs. Clarissa Schär (University of Zurich)

In Switzerland, two lines of discourse frame the topic of errors and mistakes in child protection: a historically oriented discourse on abusive practices regarding the placement of children in care in the 20th century, and a contemporary discourse on fatal cases in child protection in the context of a new organization of child protection authorities.

Both lines have in common that they have not (yet) led to an explicit debate on errors and mistakes in Switzerland. The presentation will shortly introduce the Swiss child protection system and then summarize how coercive child removals practiced until the mid-20th century have led to harm, injustice, and suffering for many children and their families. Among other things, reference is made to historical research findings in oral history with persons that had been placed as children.

It is described how the historical appraisal of this past practices fuelled a debate on the abusive character of these ‘welfare’ measure under the cover of child protection, which prompted a Federal Act entitling survivors to reparation payments. The presentation further depicts which discourses and developments preceded the revision of the child and adult protection law in the Swiss Civil Code in 2013. The amended legislation aimed at professionalizing child protection proceedings and included a pivotal shift from lay authorities to professional decision-making bodies. The current state of this process, which has led to criticism from politicians, the public, and the media particularly with regard to negative or even fatal outcomes of child protection cases, is analyzed and discussed. Strategies for avoiding and dealing with errors and mistakes are described. Using this background, the need for an explicit discourse on errors and mistakes in child protection and the explicit consideration of children’s rights in Switzerland is outlined.

Errors and Mistakes in Child Protection. International approaches and strategies to strengthen the perspective and rights of the child - Triggers and responses to errors and mistakes in child protection in Europe

Prof. Kay Biesel (University of Applied Sciences and Arts North Western Switzerland / School of Social Work), Prof. Tarja Pösö (Tampere University/Faculty of Social Sciences)

The objective of this presentation is to provide insights of a cross-national study on errors and mistakes in child protection. The errors and mistakes are approached as social constructs, seen and described differently across the countries and different historical moments, including errors of decision making (false positive, false negatives), errors of practice (errors of omission, errors of commission), child perspective errors, procedural errors, mistreatments, (system) failures, tragic events, legal violations, abusive practices in institutions, irregularities, deficiencies or dysfunctions, organisational errors and policy implementation errors. They have attracted public interest, media debates and influenced changes in policy and practice in Europe and elsewhere. The first focus of this presentation is to look at the triggers of these constructs, and second one explores the responses to errors and mistakes. The presentation is based on the analysis of the error and mistake constructs in 10 European countries and the United States, presented in more detail in a book Errors and mistakes – International approaches and strategies published by Policy Press in 2020.

The analysis demonstrates that in most (but not all) countries, serious or fatal cases and public inquiries into historic, institutional abuse triggered discussion about child protection and errors and mistakes therein. Media's role is essential. We have identified six key forms of action, reaction and non-action in the countries involved: (1) professionalisation, (2) regulation, (3) responsibilisation, (4) scandalisation, (5) rights and empowerment and (6) non-recognition or non-action. They all have implications on the practice itself as well as on practitioners and families, not to mention the very nature of child protection. In this context, some key responses which might prove helpful in reducing errors and mistakes and in promoting the position of children in child protection will be discussed.

Ethical considerations when looking at the perspective of the child - Children's self-determination in decision-making: some reflections on its controversial nature

Prof. Tarja Pösö (Tampere University)

It is widely acknowledged that children of any age should be included in making decisions of matters concerning them and that child welfare practitioners should develop their skills and attitudes to embrace children's involvement. The challenges and obstacles in involving children and implementing their rights in child welfare have been widely documented. However, the involvement of children may include some ethical controversies which have not been given much attention.

The presentation examines one form of practice in Finnish child welfare which gives children a strong position as rights holders in the decision-making process. Children, age 12 or older, are asked to express their view on the proposal of a care order and a placement in out-of-home care with their view – expression of consent or objection – having the same formal bearing on the decision-making process as that of their parents. If consent is given, the decision-making authority remains in municipal child welfare and its social work arena; in case of objection, the authority to make the decision is given to the administrative court and the arena becomes judicial. The practice has been studied in our project by using case files, interviews with social workers and recorded hearings in three Finnish municipalities. The findings of this first part of the study highlight that the practice rests strongly on the assumption of the child's self-determination being similar to that of their parents. In the second part of the study, the findings were discussed with two groups of stakeholders: care experienced young people and parents whose children had been taken into care. In this presentation, the reflections of young people on their position as rights holders are presented.

The focus groups of young people challenge the notion of self-determination in decision-making as it rests on the view of the child being an independent (legal) subject. Although a care order is about separating the child from his/her parents, the interdependency within the family relations influences children's expression of view. Their view has considerable legal and organisational implications as set by the present legislation; in addition, it affects their family relations psychosocially and emotionally, sometimes in an unintended or hidden way. Although there is the option to withdraw from expressing one's view, the children may experience their position as rights holders as being confusing for several reasons. The relational aspect of the self-determination brings several controversies to the practice of expressing consent or objection.

Consequently, the study suggests that the inclusion of children and young people in child welfare decision-making in its individual, relational and organisational complexity requires more nuanced ethical considerations than only the statement that children should be included. Otherwise children's involvement may result in expressing 'non-views'.

Ethical considerations when looking at the perspective of the child - Ethical questions regarding the place of the child in ethnographic research at the children's home

Ms. Julie Chapeau (University of Pari)

Ethnographic methods drive numerous research investigations in sociology, education, child protection, and social work (Shaw, 2003; Hamelin-Brabant, 2006; Marchive, 2012, De Suremain, 2014; Robin, Join-Lambert, Mackiewicz, 2017). Critiques of child protection research emphasize a tendency to rely on the analysis of written reports, interviews rather than direct observation which is more accurate for a deep understanding of the educational relationship (Deshayes, 2016; Tillard, 2010). But Immersing the researcher in the intimate realms of family homes raises ethical questions, especially when the study involves children.

This work builds upon doctoral research examining French strengthened home-based interventions for family reunification following out-of-home care, the court-ordered removal of children from familial abuse and/or neglect. Recognizing that a family's course extends beyond out-of-home care, I consider how ethnographic research can enhance social workers' approaches to supporting parents while also protecting child participants. I conducted participant observation of French social workers for one week per month from January 2019 to September 2019. Social workers visited 6 families and 22 children 0 to 14 years old. Settings included the household, a neutral venue, and social work service facilities. Considering the vulnerability of research subjects and deontology rules in France, I designed ethical resources such as info sheets, an ethics charter, and consent forms for distribution to local authorities, child protection services, and families. In my search for ethical, child-friendly resources, I discovered that scientific literature and deontology codes in France paid insufficient attention to the rights of children, such as those enumerated by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Bell, 2008).

Although some studies question the conditions of investigation in the families' home (Tillard and Robin, 2010), child's place in this framework remains a perspective which has been little explored in the scientific literature, especially in a child protection context. Ethical considerations are crucial for social work researchers in the context of child protection (Tillard and Robin, 2010). How does social work research within the household impact children, both during the observation and in the reporting of results (Shaw, 2008)? How should researchers adjust their position according to context, particularly when they witness evidence of child endangerment (Monceau, 2017)? What are appropriate ways to obtain a child's consent to participate in a study, whereas capacity for discernment is not defined by French law (Mallevaey, 2018)? In France, the scientific community has yet to provide adequate responses to these issues. Moreover, research in education sciences, which includes social work research, does not require review by university ethics committee and the actual ethical framework doesn't fit ethnographic methods (Beaud and Weber, 2010).

Problems arise with ethnographic interventions involving children. The presence of one or more researchers may generate fear (concerns from parents or children about interacting with strangers), rejection (throwing toys, running away), and also attachment (privileged interlocutor, play partner). The researcher is faced with securing sensitive and confidential information, which can be disclosed deliberately or without the child's knowledge (Gagnon, 2005). Ethical issues such as these need to be discussed, particularly regarding the researcher's responsibilities (Bruggeman, 2011). Moving forward, I wish to initiate a conversation in France on the adjustment of research ethics to protect child subjects (Filiod, 2014).

Ethical considerations when looking at the perspective of the child - Experiments with parent and youth participation in innovation and research projects in child welfare: A vision on client participation

Dr. Cora Bartelink (The Hague University of Applied Sciences), Dr. Rob Gilsing (The Hague University of Applied Sciences), Dr. Cathelijne Mieloo (The Hague University of Applied Sciences)

Objectives: Often, parents and youth are not involved in innovation projects executed in child welfare and child protection organizations. For several reasons, child welfare and child protection workers and their organizations may not appreciate their participation. For example, child welfare and child protection workers may find participation too stressful for their clients. Another reason may be that they believe that parents and youth do not need to know about cooperation issues between organizations. Innovations and changes in this cooperation, however, may influence the support parents and youth receive. In potential, innovation may be more successful when parents and youth become involved and contribute from their personal experiences to the project. In this presentation, we will share our experiences with parent and youth participation in innovation and research projects.

Method: We experimented in several action research projects, focusing on innovation of child welfare, with the participation of parents and youth.

In these projects, parents' and youth's experiences with and perceptions of child welfare and child protection services were at the heart of the study, by executing case reviews. Purpose of these case reviews was to learn from past experiences in order to improve future services. These case reviews consisted of an extended individual interview with parents and – if possible – youth and a reflection session with parents, youth and professionals involved in child welfare and child protection services provided to these families. Parents and youth participated actively in the process of recognizing bottlenecks and ways to improve services. Due to the several research projects, the target group differed. In one study, youth were selected for participation if they lived in (compulsory) residential care facilities; in another study, families were selected which had to deal with child safety issues and in which child protective services possibly needed to be involved.

Results: Our experiences with parent and youth participation in action research projects were (and are) informative, inspiring and challenging.

Professionals in (compulsory) residential care facilities were hesitant to the participation of both youth and parents, because of a supposed lack of capabilities or their current situation (e.g., mental disabilities or crisis). Professionals seemed quite protective to their clients, what impeded the inclusion of youth and their parents in case reviews, while these clients proved to be willing to participate when asked by researchers.

One lesson learned was that it may be worthwhile to have at first separate meetings with professionals and with parents and youth. This may particularly apply in case of very sensitive topics, for example the quality of services provided in child protective services. Parents and youth, but also professionals, may feel more safe to express their feelings, thoughts and ideas.

Conclusions: In our experience, parent and youth participation is highly necessary to research projects. Their experiences with child welfare and child protection provide additional – and sometimes discordant – perspectives on the quality of services.

Evaluate to improve the educational quality: a participatory tool for self-evaluation and evaluation of residential child and youth care in Sardinia

Dr. Luisa Pandolfi (University of Sassari), Dr. Federica Palomba (Department of Juvenile Justice in Sardinia)

Residential care services are important resources for the protection and promotion of children and adolescents temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment. The international literature about residential child and youth care has developed extensively during the last two decades (Knorth E.J., Harder A.T., Zandberg T., & Kendrick A.J., 2008; James, 2015; Boel-Studt & Tobia, 2016).

In Italy, according to the legislation, all residential institutions for children are to be accredited and registered by the competent public authority. The law no. 149/2001 also stipulates that the organization of residential care should be "a family type" with high emphasis put on interpersonal relations.

In Italy there are different approaches and lack of quality assessment guidelines.

The paper describes the action-research project '*Evaluate to improve the quality of residential care*'- carried out in Sardinia by University of Sassari in collaboration with the Department of Juvenil Justice in Sardinia– started in 2016. Main research questions were:

- What quality criteria implicitly guide educational and professional practices in residential care services?
- How they can contribute to the participatory construction of self-assessment processes?
- How to integrate self-evaluation with external evaluation?

Main objectives of the research are the following:

- to build, in a participatory way, a self-assessment tool of the quality and effectiveness of educational interventions and care process in residential care services;
- to encourage reflection, awareness and active involvement of residential care staff and child/adolescents and care leavers in a self-evaluation process;
- to activate improvement paths in residential care services;
- to validate and to test the reliability and effectiveness of self-evaluation tool.

In the first phase of the research the action research strategy was implemented.

The research involved 49 participants (educational staff of 15 regional residential care services, social workers and educators from the Centre of Juvenile Justice of Sardinia). Data were collected with a plurality of research instruments, such as: focus group; working group; brainstorming; interviews, audio recording of conversational situations and content analysis. The first outcome of the research is the tool and guidelines for self-evaluation in residential youth and child care. Guidelines aim to support the stakeholders to identify strengths and weaknesses and good practices in care-taking process.

Guidelines for self-evaluation are called C.A.M., that is the acronym, in Italian language, of Contesto (Context), Accompagnamento (Accompaniment) and Miglioramento (Improvement), which are the three main sections of the tool.

The context is the background and the setting in which the educational processes are developed. The context section of tool includes five areas: the mission and managerial aspects; the care of the spaces; professional resources; the network work and the educational framework.

The Accompaniment concerns dimensions of educational processes and practices. The Accompaniment section includes seven areas: the process of child/youth's admission; the observation phase; the child/youth participation; the individual care plan; the evaluation process; the support and involvement of the family; the leaving care process.

The improvement section allows services to identify priorities (strengths and weaknesses) in order to develop an improvement plan.

For each area of the self-assessment tool there are quality requirements and indicators and rating evaluation scales.

In the second phase of the research the first tool's validation was carried out by a 20 residential care services in Sardinia. The external evaluation phase is currently underway. This phase starts from the results of the self-assessments reports and deepens them through a one-day visit to each residential care. This space is dedicated to listening to the point of view of the educational team and the children/adolescents through focus groups, interviews with the aim of defining the improvement plan and objectives more carefully.

Examining child welfare workers and organizations: The role of multilevel modeling

Dr. Kristen Lwin (University of Windsor), Dr. Barbara Fallon (University of Toronto)

Objective: Child welfare systems play a significant role in society and aim to promote the safety and well-being of children. In order to successfully address this dual mandate, child welfare organizations and the workers they employ must function effectively. The body of literature in this area has begun to develop, illustrating that organizational climate (Glisson & Green, 2011) and research use (Wulczyn et al., 2016) are associated with out-of-home care. Further, child welfare workers have been shown to make decisions differently based on their education and experience (Font & Maguire-Jack, 2015), caseload (Lwin, in preparation), amount of training (Filippelli, Lwin, Fallon, Trocmé, in press), and organizational differences based on the stress services available to workers (Lwin, Fluke, Fallon, Trocmé, & Mishna, 2018). While there is minimal research in this area, further research is required. What makes all of the aforementioned studies unique is their use of multilevel modeling, a complex statistical analysis that considers dependence or clustering in the data.

This presentation will discuss the results of five separate secondary data analyses that used multilevel modeling to address each research question. While multilevel modeling (e.g., hierarchical linear models, mixed models) is rarely used in child welfare research, it is appropriate for research designs whereby participants are clustered at more than one level. The units of analyses (e.g. children, workers, organizations), therefore, are nested within each higher level. It would be a logical assumption that workers' practice may be to some degree dependent on the organization within which they work and that organizations differ amongst themselves. Multilevel modeling accounts for this dependence.

Method: Each study included in this presentation is a secondary data analysis of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, a national incidence study that aims to produce an estimate of reported child maltreatment. Each set of analyses focused on one child welfare decision point (i.e., substantiation, risk of future maltreatment, referral to community service, ongoing services) and assessed whether clinical, worker (e.g., education, caseload), or organizational (e.g., morale, stress services) characteristics predicted the decision. Part of the multilevel modelling process includes developing single level regression models, a common method of analyses in child welfare research that does not consider data dependence and analyzes each data point individually. To better understand the potential impact of these analyses, results of the standard single level analysis will be compared against multilevel analysis for each of the five studies.

Results: Comparison of single and multilevel models illustrates significant differences among worker and organizational level predictors in each set of analyses. Using single level regression, results indicate that organizational factors such as the amount of stress services, multiservice agencies, and agencies with a large proportion of investigations involving Aboriginal families predict the substantiation decision. Multilevel analyses, however, found that organizational level variables is appropriate in analyses with all decision points in these data. Two- and three-level analyses suggest that there is no one worker characteristic that consistently significantly predicts decisions. For example, worker experience, position, caseload, and interaction between training and caseload predict the substantiation decision. Further, degree level, experience, caseload, interaction between degree level and age significantly predict the worker's perception of risk of future maltreatment. However, no worker characteristics significantly predicted the ongoing services decision, but organizational characteristics did.

Conclusion: Single versus multilevel tests have illustrated very different results and should be taken into consideration when analyzing data that may be clustered. Indeed, to avoid policy and practice adjustment errors, it is important to use appropriate statistical analyses.

Examining economic hardship among child welfare-involved families: Evidence from the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2018

Ms. Rachael Lefebvre (University of Toronto), Dr. Barbara Fallon (University of Toronto), Dr. David Rothwell (Oregon State University), Dr. Nico Trocmé (McGill University, School of Social Work), Dr. Tara Black (University of Toronto)

Objectives

Research on economic hardship for child welfare-involved families in Canada is underdeveloped. Secondary analyses of the latest cycle of the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (OIS-2018) were conducted to examine the profile of children and families who experience economic hardship and are investigated by child protection services in Ontario, Canada. This study also assessed the contribution of economic hardship to service dispositions such as transfers to ongoing child welfare services and placement in out-of-home care.

Methods

The OIS-2018 is the sixth provincial study to examine the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of the children and families investigated by child protection services in Ontario. The OIS-2018 tracked 7,115 child maltreatment-related investigations conducted in a representative sample of 18 Child Welfare Service agencies across Ontario in the fall of 2018. Weighted provincial annual estimates were derived based on these investigations. Data were collected directly from investigating child welfare workers upon the completion of their initial investigations. Workers were asked to provide clinical information on a variety of case, household, caregiver, and child characteristics. In order to assess whether the family experienced economic hardship, workers were asked to indicate whether the household ran out of money for their food, housing, utilities, transportation, and/or phone bills in the past six months. For the purpose of this analysis, a composite measure of economic hardship was derived by noting whether a household experienced any one of these conditions. Information was also collected on several investigation outcomes, including substantiation of maltreatment, referrals to services, and transfers to ongoing child protection services. Logistic regression models were developed to predict transfers to ongoing services, and placement based on an ecological model of maltreatment.

Results

There were an estimated 158,476 maltreatment-related investigations conducted in Ontario in 2018. In nine percent of investigations (an estimated 13,420 investigations), the worker indicated that the family had run out of money for at least one of the basic necessities included in the composite measure of economic hardship. Children in households facing economic hardship were more likely to have internalizing concerns, developmental concerns, and academic difficulties. Their primary caregivers were more than two times more likely to have noted alcohol abuse concerns, mental health issues, physical health issues, and few social supports, as well as more than four times more likely to have noted substance abuse concerns. Multivariate models showed that, controlling for key clinical and case characteristics, children living in families facing economic hardship were one and a half times more likely to have their case transferred to ongoing child protection services (OR = 1.52, $p < 0.001$) and over two times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care during the investigation stage (OR = 2.26, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion

A significant proportion of children investigated by child welfare authorities in Ontario live in families struggling with economic hardship. Our findings emphasize that families identified to child welfare who run out of money for basic necessities have multiple complex needs. When controlling for demographics, caregiver risk,

previous substantiated maltreatment, type of current maltreatment, and certain socio-economic variables, children living in families facing economic hardship are significantly more likely to receive ongoing child welfare services and be placed in out-of-home care. It is of utmost importance for the child welfare sector to consider how to best promote positive child adaptation in the context of such multiple adversities. The implications in regard to future research and clinical practice will be discussed.

Examining the role of mental health disorders on adult functioning among Canadian emerging adults with a history of foster care

Ms. Javiera Pumarino (University of British Columbia), Dr. Anne Gadermann (University of British Columbia), Dr. Chris Richardson (University of British Columbia)

Background: Approximately 40,000 Canadian children and adolescents live in foster care; thousands age out of care between ages 16 and 19 each year. There is growing concern over the vulnerability of these youth, partly because of numerous highly publicized reports of premature death related to untreated mental health and substance use issues.

Objective: The objective of this study is to investigate the role of youth mental health disorders on adult functioning among emerging adults (aged between 18 and 29 years) with history of foster care.

Methods: This study is using an explanatory mixed methods approach, which involves a quantitative stage followed by a qualitative stage to explore the quantitative findings in more depth. The quantitative stage is following a population-based retrospective birth cohort design using de-identified linked administrative data from the province of Manitoba. The study sample includes all the individuals born in Manitoba between 1986 and 1998 who have available records in the Manitoba Population Research Data Repository (n = 210,439). These data are being used to answer the following research questions (RQ): (1) What is the association between history of foster care and (a) youth mental health disorders (i.e.: internalizing, externalizing, psychotic, substance use) and (b) adult functioning outcomes (i.e.: high school incompletion, receipt of income assistance, criminal justice involvement); and (2) to what extent do youth mental health disorders account for the association between history of foster care and each adverse adult functioning outcome? RQ1 is being answered using logistic regression models, adjusted using propensity score matching; RQ2 is being explored using causal mediation analysis. The qualitative stage is examining the complex relationship between the foster care experience, mental health disorders, and the transition into adulthood, by exploring the experiences of a group of emerging adults with a history of foster care and a diagnosed mental health disorder. It is also exploring youth's perceptions on how to improve the mental health supports provided before and during their transition into adulthood. The study is being implemented in partnership with an intensive case management program based in Vancouver, BC. Through an integrated knowledge translation process, program stakeholders are being involved in the planning of all steps of the study, including definition of specific research questions, which are being informed by the quantitative findings, and methodological decisions (e.g.: data collection approach and tools).

Progress to Date and Preliminary Results: This study is being developed as a PhD dissertation. The EUSARF 2020 presentation will include findings from both stages. Quantitative stage, RQ1: history of foster care is significantly associated with having any type of youth mental health disorder (Matched Odds Ratio: 2.6, 95%CI: 2.4, 2.7) and with each type of disorder. Emerging adults with a history of foster care are significantly more likely to have been charged with a crime (MOR: 2.9; 95%CI: 2.7, 3.1), have received income assistance (MOR: 4.1; 95%CI: 3.9, 4.3), and have not completed high school (MOR: 5.3; 95%CI: 5,0, 5.6). In conclusion, youth with a history of foster care are vulnerable to youth mental health disorders and adverse functioning outcomes in emerging adulthood. Qualitative stage: as of February 2020, 12 stakeholders are participating in the study's planning committee (6 current and former patients and 6 staff members).

Impact: Evidence generated from this study will increase our understanding of the psychosocial needs of youth transitioning out of care and will inform the development of interventions to support their successful transition into independent adult living.

Expectations and attitudes of children and teenagers regarding intensive family support in Switzerland

Mrs. Hirmete Hasani (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family), Ms. Julia Quehenberger (ZHAW), Prof. David Lätsch (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family)

Context: In Switzerland, intensive family support has become increasingly important in recent years and an integral part of the range of social work on offer. Correspondingly, there are signs of increased legal implementation at the cantonal level. Intensive family support, or "sozialpädagogische Familienbegleitung" as it is called in German, is often installed in families in which the parents, usually triggered by an overburdening situation, neglect (or are at an imminent risk of neglecting) their children. In order to avoid children being placed in an out-of-family environment, intensive family support intervenes preventively and tries to work together with the family on the problematic issues in their living environment. However, despite the growing importance of intensive family support, particularly in the area of child protection, research has hardly addressed this subject, especially in Switzerland. The proposed poster presentation draws from an ongoing long-term study to investigate the effectiveness of intensive family support in relation to the psychosocial functioning of the parents and children involved. The child's perspective on the intervention is of particular interest in the context of the study, as it has hardly been reflected in the research landscape so far.

Objectives: In the research presented, children's attitudes and expectations toward the family support intervention will be addressed. Questions are raised with regard to how well informed children feel about the intervention, how they feel about the social worker both at the start and in the further course of the intervention, and whether they have a say in the organisation of the intervention at different stages. Moreover, changes in these indicators over time will be mapped to specific "activities of care" reported by both children and social workers. These "care activities" were designed in accordance with a Dutch family support instrument (Tausendfreund et al., 2015).

Method: In our ongoing study, we ask parents and children as well as family support workers using standardized questionnaires at four different measurement points in time. A sample of approx. 100 cases in the family support condition is expected. The three perspectives enable us to obtain a complete picture of the family situation and the working methods of the family support staff. Calculations are based on the first and the second data waves at the beginning and two months into the intervention, respectively.

Conclusions: Results from our ongoing study are considered important because they may contribute both to a better understanding of the children's perspectives and to a more careful involvement of children and teenagers in the support process. Results will be discussed in terms of their practical relevance.

Tausendfreund, T., Metselaar, J., Conradie, J., de Groot, M., Schipaanboord, N., Knot-Dickscheit, J., Grietens, H. and Knorth, E. (2015), "Self-reported care activities in a home-based intervention programme for families with multiple problems", Journal of Children's Services, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 29-44. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCS-07-2014-0034

EXPERIENCE IN MALLORCA OF THE CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION COUNCIL IN THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM.

Mr. ESCANDELL MAYANS (HEAD FAMILY CARE SERVICE)

In the Child and Adolescent Protection Service of Mallorca, in 2014 we created the council for child and adolescent participation in the child protection system

The active participation of children and adolescents in all areas of life is the first necessary step because they assume their social responsibility. Promoting and developing the right of participation of children is a need for justice and democratic exercise.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989. Instrument of Ratification of November 30, 1990 in Article 12 :, as well as Law 26/2015, of 28 July, of modification of the protection system for children and adolescents, they indicate their legal framework.

OBJECTIVE:

The council of childhood and adolescence in the system of protection of minors is considered as an organ where children and young people have a real role, where they can raise their needs and jointly seek possible solutions with adults.

It is about listening to children and adolescents as citizens who have the right to participate in a Service that makes decisions that directly affect their lives.

Thus, the council assumes the concept of participation that implies decision-making capacity, and that is not reduced to mere non-binding consultation, or to the transmission of information without giving the opportunity to express what they think.

CONCLUSION:

We present a summary of the following contributions that in these 5 years of project development he has made:

How to improve children’s first contact with the Children’s Service.

The characteristics that a center educator must have.

How supervised visits can be improved.

How to reduce the risk of escapes.

Exploring and Re-imagining the Human Rights Law that Governs Child Protection from a Child's Perspective

Ms. Maria Corbett (National University of Ireland, Galway)

International and regional human rights law governs State actions in relation to taking a child into care. Social workers, guardians *ad litem*, lawyers and judges must adhere to this law to ensure child protection decision-making is human rights compliant. Many European countries are members of the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union (EU). These three bodies employ a broadly consistent approach towards the rights engaged by child protection decision-making. However, they differ in the extent to which their laws are framed from the perspective of the child.

Objectives

This presentation has four objectives. First, it will identify and discuss the provisions of the UN, CoE and EU law that are of relevance to judicial child protection proceedings. Secondly, it will assess which of the bodies offers the best protection for the vindication of the rights of the child, and explore possible weaknesses, contradictions and gaps in the existing human rights framework. Thirdly, it will illustrate this discussion by drawing on examples of national law and practice from a number of jurisdictions, including Ireland, England and Germany. Finally, the presentation will conclude by proposing how gaps in the law could be addressed.

Method

Socio-legal research completed as part of a doctoral thesis on child protection decision-making is the basis for this presentation. Three methods are employed: doctrinal legal analysis of international and European instruments and caselaw to identify human rights norms and standards; an analysis of law and practice in a number of jurisdictions including Ireland, England and Germany; and secondary analysis of relevant academic research and statutory publications. The main focus is on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Results

A complex web of rights and obligations emerges from the analysis of international and European human rights law. Some are substantive child-centred rights which recognise the child as a rights holder, such as the right of the child to protection from harm, to be provided with alternative care and to have his or her views heard and taken into account. While others are procedural rights granted to anyone before the courts, such as the rights to a fair and timely hearing and to participate in proceedings. Child protection decision-making often involves a conflict between the child's right to be protected from harm and the right to respect for family life (which is afforded to both parents and children). The law seeks to mediate this conflict through employing the principle of the best interests of the child and the doctrine of proportionality.

The caselaw of the European Court of Human Rights holds that a care admission must be a necessary (proportionate) measure to protect the best interests of the child, and whenever possible, should be temporary and for the shortest possible duration with a view to family reunification. National laws and practice vary greatly in how they vindicate these rights, in particular how they respect the agency of the child who is the subject of the proceedings.

Conclusion

There is a need for a closer examination of the interface between the law and social work best practice, especially in the areas of family support, newborn admissions, non-consensual adoptions from care and the participation of children in proceedings.

International human rights law needs to be re-imagined to ensure its provisions truly adopt a child-rights based approach.

Exploring Child Experiences with a One-Day Multidisciplinary Health Assessment for Children in Out-of-Home Care

Ms. Monica Haune (Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo), Dr. Øivin Christiansen (Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare (RKBU), NORCE Norwegian reseach centre), Prof. Hanne Haavind (Department of Psychology, University of Oslo)

Background: Most children and adolescents who enter out-of-home care have extensive, often undetected, health and care needs. International guidelines recommend routine, early and comprehensive health assessment of children entering out-of-home care. However, few models for how such assessments may be performed have been evaluated, and the children's perspective is seldom addressed in this context. Data presented stem from an evaluation of a comprehensive assessment model, where multidisciplinary teams offered a single-day trauma-focused assessment of child health and care needs.

Objective: The objective is to explore how adolescents perceived and experienced a one-day multidisciplinary assessment of mental, physical and developmental needs.

Method: The study uses a descriptive exploratory qualitative research approach based on semi structured interviews with 12 adolescents, aged 11 to 16. The interviews were conducted within four weeks of the assessment day, transcribed and subsequently analyzed thematically using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis framework.

Results: The adolescents shared their views on the different parts of the assessment day, their experiences with meeting the assessment team and their expectations before and after the assessment day. Across individual differences, adolescents emphasized the importance of clinicians creating a safe and understanding environment. Other emerging themes were the perceived relevance of the assessment and living in uncertain care conditions.

Conclusions: Through this study we gain knowledge of how adolescents in out-of-home care experience and attribute meaning to being subject of a comprehensive health assessment. Their experiences reveal both challenges and advantages from a user perspective. Clinicians need to be aware of the importance of individual adaption of the standardized assessment and of using a sensitive communication style. The findings may have implications for how assessment of vulnerable child populations should be performed, and specifically for further development of services offering early assessment to children in out-of-home care.

Exploring the meaning of permanency with young people from out-of-home-care

Dr. Susan Collings (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The University of Sydney), Dr. Amy Conley Wright (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The University of Sydney)

Objectives: Permanency is an intangible feeling that can be understood as a state of mind not a physical state. Research shows that, despite being an elusive concept, a sense of permanency can have lifelong implications for children and young people in out-of-home care. With its increasingly central role in child welfare policy, the research focus has been on legal and physical rather than relational dimensions of permanency. Cross sectional studies have measured child outcomes related to stability and security in out-of-home-care and qualitative studies on the topic have typically involved adults. The views of children and young people themselves remain under-researched. Permanency reforms are underway across Australia and must be informed by the voices of young people with first-hand experience of out-of-home-care to bring the situated knowledge that is critical to improving their transition to adulthood. Participatory methods provide an avenue for marginalised voices to be heard. Researchers have previously used visual methodologies with children and young people to enable their authentic participation and to harness creativity as a vehicle for self-expression and social change. A small, exploratory study was undertaken in New South Wales, Australia to understand how perceptions of permanency shaped emerging adulthood for young people with a care background.

Method: A Photovoice study was undertaken in 2019/20 with eleven participants aged 16 to 24 years who were in or had exited out-of-home care. Ten young people took part in a group which met 4-5 times in-person or via videoconference and one young person with significant physical disabilities was supported to participate in 1:1 sessions with a research team member. Groups provided a forum for young people to share their views of how out-of-home-care shapes young people's lives and to facilitate the use of photography to represent permanency and belonging visually. Participants reached consensus on the images that reflected common experiences and worked with the researchers to compose captions and curate a selection for production in a photo-book. Thematic analysis of textual and visual data was undertaken.

Results: Three themes emerged: 1) nature as constancy; 2) cultural connection; and 3) small acts of belonging. Nature represented permanency despite being ephemeral because it offered comforting reminders that change and renewal were inevitable, thereby providing a source of constancy. Images of sunsets and sunrises were used to signify this theme by showing that the sun rises and sets no matter what else is going on in one's life. The land connected Aboriginal young people to culture, people and history. Images of seashells signified ancestral bones and served as a physical reminder and a source of pride at belonging to the most enduring culture on earth. A sense of permanency could not be rushed but grew over time through small everyday acts performed by adults that promoted children's sense of being integral to family life. Images of pets, family holidays and home cooking were used to signify this. The sense of permanency was not found only in the formalities of a legal order or a physical abode, but in the small acts of unspoken and unconditional acceptance.

Conclusions: The study showed that these young people have different views to adults of what constitutes permanency, including adults who make decisions that impact directly on their lives such as policymakers and practitioners. Photography allowed young people to express a more nuanced and expansive view of permanency than has been previously reported or would have been possible using verbal methods alone. These young people with a care experience created and disseminated their own stories of resilience, belonging and cultural pride, which has already been used to inform practice in New South Wales and beyond.

Exploring the Phenomenon of Overrepresentation of Gender and Sexual Minority Youth in United States Foster Care Systems

Mr. Ryan Karnoski (University of California, Berkeley)

Introduction: A key feature of academic and political discourse on Gender and Sexual Minority (GSM) youth in the United States is the assertion of overrepresentation in child welfare systems. This issue has been qualitatively documented in researcher and practitioner accounts, but few quantitative evaluations of the claim exist. A widely cited study offered empirical evidence for this claim, finding GSM youth to be overrepresented in foster care in Los Angeles County at a rate of 1.5 to 2 times higher than that of GSM youth who are not in foster care; a finding that rapidly evolved into the truism that GSM youth are overrepresented in U.S. child welfare systems at large.

Objectives: This scoping review of the literature evaluates the issue of overrepresentation of GSM youth in child welfare, and seeks to identify specific necessary areas of further exploration of this phenomenon in social welfare scholarship. In addition, this paper analyzes available academic and gray literature to illustrate a larger historical and sociopolitical context for the emerging phenomenon of overrepresentation of GSM youth in United States child welfare systems.

Methods: Articles were reviewed for historically and contemporarily relevant information on this issue, as well as theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing overrepresentation of GSM youth in foster care. Relevant articles were analyzed for empirical evidence of overrepresentation of GSM youth in foster care systems and child welfare systems at large.

Results: Findings of this review support the existing consensus that GSM overrepresentation exists in U.S. foster care systems. While there are relatively few methodologically rigorous empirical studies to confirm qualitative and anecdotal accounts of this phenomenon, newer, larger datasets provide substantial evidence of rates of child welfare system involved youth identifying as GSM to be as high as three to four times the rate of youth identifying as GSM in the general population. Although studies have explored the unique hardships of these youth, and some emerging studies have sought to quantify rates of overrepresentation, there are few empirical conclusions about the causes of this phenomenon due to an overall lack of data on causal factors related to entry into care, i.e., specific types of maltreatment, age of entry, etc. Prior to the Trump administration, United States child welfare policy had begun to reflect a growing understanding of the unique identities, experiences, and needs of this population and those who provide their care. However, multiple Health and Human Services policies have recently been revised to remove previously added anti-discrimination language that protected gender and sexual minorities.

Conclusions: This review produced several presently unanswered questions which future research should seek to address. One such question is methodological; whether current survey and demographic instruments can accurately and precisely capture the identity categories of gender and sexual minority youth in child welfare systems. Another line of inquiry is into confounding factors which may or may not provide insight into causes of GSM overrepresentation in United States child welfare systems. Persistent efforts should be directed toward the reinstatement of such anti-discrimination policies. Finally, gender and sexual minority status information should be included as a key demographic characteristic in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to enable future data analysis on this population.

Exploring the positive influence of informal support in the education and employment progress of care-experienced people.

Prof. Robbie Gilligan (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin), Dr. Laura Arnau Sabatés (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)), Dr. Eavan Brady (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin)

A major challenge facing young people in care or care leavers is finding support to assist their progress. There is strong evidence that their support networks may be weakened by issues linked to their pre-care, in care and, where relevant, post-care experiences. There is also evidence that care experienced young people may fare less well than others in both education and employment, despite consistent findings that progress in these areas may be associated with better overall outcomes.

Since support is important for outcomes for young people in care generally, it also follows that support is likely to be influential in positive ways for their progress in the specific areas of education and employment. There is evidence that support is indeed relevant to positive progress in these areas. Yet where is that support to come from - given the challenges young people in care and care leavers may encounter in finding support?

Professional services may be scarce or non-existent in some contexts, especially when young people age out of the care system. Any professional support may also be limited in time or scope according to local legislation, policy or the rationing of resources. Beyond professional sources of support, there may also be ‘informal’ sources of support – from family and friends, or from professionals or carers who offer support to a degree that may go beyond what is commonly understood as the role of the given professionals or carers. Informal support may come from the efforts of informal actors or professional actors acting informally (above and beyond their normal remit). How influential are such sources of support in the educational and work pathways of care experienced people? How do the effects of such support efforts play out in later years? Who are the actors who provide this type of informal support - and what is it they actually do?

This presentation will draw on evidence from a number of studies (including Brady and Gilligan, 2019; Gilligan, 2019; Arnau-Sabates and Gilligan, 2020; Gilligan and Arnau-Sabates, 2017; Arnau-Sabates and Gilligan, 2015) to identify qualitative examples of how informal support influences progress in education and employment *over time.*It will also reflect on the nature of what may prove to be ‘pivotal’ influences that may often be low-key and subtle in nature, but have helped to shift a personal trajectory in education or employment in a decisively positive way. There will also be attention to contextual factors that constrain or promote progress over time, including examples of how professional efforts may interact with informal support with productive effect. The presentation will acknowledge the value of a life course perspective in considering informal support of educational progress of care experienced adults (Brady and Gilligan, 2018) and will suggest that this perspective may also have similar value in considering support of their progress in the closely related area of employment (Gilligan, 2019). Finally, the presentation includes some relevant examples from the global south where the question of support based on informal effort may be very pertinent. The overall argument, however, will be that there is growing evidence to suggest that informal support is of importance in both the global north and global south

Exploring therapeutic components in a sample of therapeutic residential child care facilities in Spain

Mrs. Alba Águila-Otero (University of Oviedo), Prof. Iriana Santos (University of Cantabria), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo)

Therapeutic Residential Care (TRC) are specific programmes, mostly for adolescents with severe emotional and/or behavioural problems in the child care system. This groups is characterized by the presence of different serious risk behaviours and mental health problems (Davidson, Dumigan, Ferguson & Nuget, 2011; McLean, Price-Robertson & Robinson, 2011) requiring a specific and intense intervention in order to return to the birth family or another less restrictive child care placement. Despite the relevance of those programmes, there is scarce research about the practices and interventions in TRC facilities in Spain.

The main aim of this research is to analyse the components of the intervention in a sample of TRC facilities in Spain, exploring the main therapeutic activities and resources implemented in those programmes.

Participants consisted of 393 adolescents (132 girls and 261 boys) aged between 13 and 18 years old (*M* = 15.52; DT = 1.25) placed in TRC programmes. The sample came from 34 TRC facilities located in different Spanish regions: Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, Basque Country, Catalonia, Castile and Leon, Madrid and Tenerife. Information about therapeutic intervention inside and outside the centres was provided through an *ad-hoc* questionnaire filled out by psychologists or the key social educators for each case. TRC project documents were collected form each facility in order to analyse the structure, organization and resources offered to young people.

Most of the adolescents (86.3%) was receiving mental health treatment, inside and/or outside the TRC facility. To analyse the type of treatment, the programmes were divided into three groups, considering the place of the therapeutic intervention: inside the facility, outside the facility or both contexts, the latter being more frequent. The most frequent type of treatment inside the premises was psychological, whereas the psychiatric treatments were usually outside. A large percentage of adolescents in mental health treatment (77%) had some mental health disorder diagnosed. The most frequent diagnosis was behavioural disorder, Attentional Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and substance abuse. More than half of the sample (58.5%) had some psychotropic treatment prescribed, with a high use of antipsychotics. Significant differences were found in the prescribed medication between boys and girls.

Regarding main characteristics of TRC programmes, most of them were private and with large differences with respect to the capacity. About 70% of the facilities had some mental health staff (psychologists or psychiatrics) and 82.4% declared to work with a specific intervention model, mostly cognitive-behavioural approach.

One of the most curious findings was that 13.4% of the sample were not receiving any mental health intervention despite of being referred to a TRC program. Also, we have found that not all the facilities had mental health staff and in that case young people were receiving exclusively treatments outside the facility.

The most frequent intervention was a combination of treatments inside and outside the facilities. It is important to highlight the high use of psychotropic medication in these youngsters. TRC centres were very different in size and available resources, but the use of cognitive-behavioural approach was frequent. Finally, given the high frequency of victimization experiences in this population, the use of trauma-based models and practices in residential care, especially in TRC programmes, is also recommended.

Exploring Understanding of Care Leaving through Life Course Theory

Dr. Judith Havlicek (University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign)

How does *life course theory* help or hinder the field's ability to produce research that increases more nuanced understanding of transition that care leavers make to adulthood? In exploring this question, the papers in this symposium engage theory to address previous calls by scholars to move beyond overly simplistic descriptions of outcomes and generate more sustainable solutions for improving the prospects that care leavers face in adulthood (Stein, 2006; Berridge, 2007). Across numerous countries and continents, studies have consistently found elevated rates of social exclusion in the transition to adulthood among care leavers. As a theory that encourages dynamic understanding of person-environment interactions over time, life course theory may prove particularly useful in capturing the complex mixture of events and processes that shape adult trajectories, including structural, family, and personal factors (Berridge, 2007; Stein, 2006)). Four concepts of life course theory are central to the studies presented in this panel: *human agency,*' '*linked lives*,' '*the timing of lives*,' and '*lives in time and place*' (Elder, 1998). The first paper, for example, applies the principle of '*human agency*' to understand pathways to postsecondary education among 18-former care leavers in Ireland, and in doing so, draws attention to the contexts that shape actions. The second paper considers '*linked lives*' and decisions around extended care in Norway and Sweden through the relationships care leavers have with foster parents. Each study sheds important light on ways to activate safety nets in early adulthood. A fourth paper considers *'linked lives'* with respect to how family relationships influence adult well-being in Norway. A fifth paper considers the concepts of *'linked lives'*and '*agency'* in the transition that care leavers with disabilities make to adulthood in Northern Ireland, placing transitions and identities in a social-relational context. The last paper considers the principle of '*lives in time and place'* from the vantage point of events prior to, during, and after public care among 12 former care leavers in the United States, providing insights into the timing of risks and power of social and institutional contexts to weaken them. This collection of studies describes care leaving across five contexts, uses qualitative research methods that uncover young people's perspectives, and expands understanding of sustainable solutions for strengthening care leavers' outcomes in adulthood.

Exploring Understanding of Care Leaving through Life Course Theory - “Exploring a life course perspective on the experiences of disabled care leavers in transition to adult life.”

Prof. Berni Kelly (Queen’s University Belfast)

Session Chair: Judy Havlicek

Abstract:

(1) Background and Objectives

Disabled children and young people are over-represented in the population of children living in public care in Northern Ireland. Some of these young people have complex and multiple needs and require a high level of specialist support whilst in care and as they transition to young adulthood. For others, with mild or borderline levels of impairment, there are unique challenges as they navigate the journey from care to independent or supported living, negotiate complex personal and familial relationships and develop a sense of identity and belonging in their communities. Drawing on key concepts of linked lives, turning points and agency, this paper will explore how the life course perspective offers a framework that can enhance our understanding of the complex lives of disabled young people in transition from public care to adulthood.

(2) Methods

This paper draws on case study data from a research project in Northern Ireland involving 31 care leavers with mental health and/or intellectual disabilities aged 16-23 years old. The case studies involved reading case files, interviewing young people three times over a 18 month period and interviewing their birth parents, foster carers and social workers. The young people were transitioning from a range of out-of-home care settings including small residential homes, non-relative foster care or kinship care. At the age of 18, several young people were still living with their foster or kinship carer and remained there well into their young adult lives. However, most left care and either moved on to live independently or were accommodated in specialist/supported living services.

(3) Results

The case studies provide unique insight into how these young people perceived their transition to young adult life as a key stage in their life course. The findings show how their past influenced their present and how disabled care leavers demonstrated agency as they constructed their young adult identities, in different contexts and within complex social and familial relationships. The importance of linked lives and inter-dependence is a core theme, alongside the impact of disabling barriers on life course trajectories.

(4) Conclusion

The life course perspective offers a helpful lens for analysing the complex experiences of disabled young people in transition from public care into their young adult lives. The agency of these disabled young people is highlighted, however, it is often exercised in the context of stigmatizing and exclusionary structures and systems. Using the concept of linked lives, the findings help to show how families, carers and professionals can best support disabled care leavers to transition to inter-dependent young adult lives in the context of positive familial and peer relationships and to develop an affirmative sense of belonging and self-identity.

Exploring understanding of Care Leaving through Life Course Theory - Navigating sibling relations over time - a Norwegian sample of care experienced young adults doing well

Dr. Elisiv Bakketeig (OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University), Dr. Tonje Gundersen (OsloMet - Oslo Metropolitan University)

Session Chair;Judy Havlicek

*Objectives*When a child for different reasons are placed into public care, their birth family remain important persons in their lives. Many children placed in care express a desire for more contact with their family – including siblings - even though this do not apply for all and may vary over time. Since 2014, the Norwegian child welfare agencies are obligated by law to facilitate contact between children in care and their siblings during placement. Sibling relations regarding children in public care have received more attention in international research during the last few years (Driscoll, 2019; Wojcick, Range, Gutierrez, Hough & Gamboni, 2018). There is however still lessons to be learned about how care experienced young people *themselves* understand their relationship with their siblings and over time.

Our *aim* with this presentation is two-folded; first to present how care experienced young adults, who were doing well at the time of the interview, understood and navigated their relationships with their siblings prior to, during and after they had left care. Second, to reflect on if and how the life course theory, as a theoretical lens may help increase our understanding of these relationships when attending especially to the concepts of linked lives and human agency (Hutchison, 2005).

*Methods*The sample relates to a larger cross-national, longitudinal study called “Against all odds?”. The paper analyses three waves of in-depth interviews with 24 Norwegian young adults aged 16-32 who were either students or in stable employment at the time, and thus considered to be doing well according to common indicators in studies of care leavers’ outcomes. Photographs taken by the young adults about what they found important in their lives were also part of the data. The interviews were biographical focusing on their lives before, in and after care and with family being one of the main topics. The analyses were done by careful reading of the transcripts and joint coding in order to identify patterns in the data.

Preliminary results show that most of these young adults have experienced severe adversity prior to being placed in public care involving their parents using drugs or struggling with severe mental problems. Some have also been subject to violence and sexual abuse. Despite the hardship prior to placements, many of them describe good as well as bad childhood experiences. Unsurprisingly, these childhood experiences influence their relations with their siblings in different ways – during and after placement. We also see that they make use of different strategies to navigate these relationships. Some take responsibility for younger siblings by offering them a roof over their heads, or by offering them fun experiences to compensate for a childhood in poverty. Several choose to distance themselves from a brother or sister in periods when he or she are using drugs. Having the autonomy and flexibility to navigate these relations seems to be important for them in order to manage to remain in contact.

*Conclusion*Life course theory may help us increase our understanding about how young people, formerly in care, experience and navigate these relations over time. This knowledge is important to improve the support offered by the child welfare services during placement and in the transition to adulthood.

Exploring Understanding of Care Leaving through Life Course Theory - The value of the life course theory of human agency: An example from a study of the educational journeys of care experienced people

Dr. Eavan Brady (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin), Prof. Robbie Gilligan (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin)

Aim: The aim of this presentation is to draw on the authors' experience of applying the life course principle of 'human agency' to a study of the educational journeys of care experienced people. We will highlight the ways in which the life course principle of 'agency' can illuminate our understanding of how the educational pathways of care-experienced adults are shaped over time in the context of structural constraints and opportunities. This presentation draws on the authors' previously published work (Brady & Gilligan, 2019).

Background: While some young people with care experience progress to later stages of education (Jackson & Ajayi, 2007; Jackson & Cameron, 2012), lower numbers of care-experienced young people pursue higher education when compared to peers (Harrison, 2017; Mendes et al., 2014). Much work in this area has sought to identify factors influencing educational attainment and progress (Jackson & Cameron, 2012; Pecora, 2012). However, there has been limited application of wider social theory to efforts aimed at understanding the reasons for the low educational attainment of those with care experience (Berridge, 2007). This is an issue that was also raised by Stein (2006) in relation to empirical work on young people leaving care. In this presentation, we aim to contribute to the theoretical examination of this issue by demonstrating the value of applying a core principle of the life course perspective – human agency – to the analysis of data gathered as part of a life course study of the educational journeys of care-experienced adults. The life course conceptualisation of agency captures both the role of the individual and society in shaping individual actions while also including a temporal dimension to the concept (Hitlin & Elder, 2007b).

Methods: Findings presented are drawn from data collected via 'educational life history' interviews (Moore, 2006) with 18 care-experienced adults (aged 24-36) in Ireland. Data were analysed using theoretical thematic analysis through the lens of 'human agency'.

Findings: The principle of agency, as conceptualised from a life course perspective, is a valuable conceptual tool for providing new insights on this issue. Five key themes will be presented: 1) Big and small acts of agency have the capacity to influence educational pathways; 2) Agentic actions can have a positive and negative impact on educational pathways; 3) Agency is visible in intentional actions focused on long-term goals and reactive actions focused on short-term effects; 4) Agency and the passage of time are inextricably linked; 5) The impact of context and structural forces on individual agency is ubiquitous over time. Agentic actions relevant to educational pathways are evident at different points – during the period in care, in the time since leaving care, and where relevant also in the time before entering care.

Conclusions: Study findings suggest that agency is a valuable conceptual tool for examining how individual actions shape the education of care-experienced adults throughout the life course while also taking account of how these actions interact with external and structural factors over time. This paper also highlights various 'types' of expressions of agency along with the interconnectedness of life stages and choices and decisions made at various points in time. The life course perspective on agency reminds us that while people may have rocky periods, educational journeys can be restarted at any point in the life course, given the right supports and circumstances.

Reference for article that presentation draws on:

Brady, E. & Gilligan, R. (2019). The role of agency in shaping the educational journeys of care-experienced adults: Insights from a life course study of education and care. Children & Society. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12361

Exploring Understanding of Care Leaving through Life Course Theory - Understanding Risks and Protections of Care Leavers through Time and Place

Dr. Judith Havlicek (University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign)

Objectives This study widens the view given to young people making the transition from public care and situates understanding about risks and protective factors within a life course perspective. Surprisingly little research has viewed care leavers in the context of life experiences before, during, and after child welfare. Questions about who care leavers are typically begin at exit from public care. Far less attention has been given to understanding lives within a longer developmental time frame. In altering the vantage point from which care leavers are viewed, the life course principle of *'lives in timing and place'* is set forth as representing a key element of a more fully developed understanding of of care leaving. Neither theory nor research currently provides compelling information concerning how developmental risks and protective factors accumulate before and during foster care, shift over time, interact, and/or influence the direction of the life course. Developing a fuller picture raises new empirical concerns. First, how does our understanding of care leaving change when viewed from a longer developmental time frame? Second, how do care leavers make meaning of the risks and protections in their lives? Third, where in the life course do significant changes in risks and protective factors take place and what influences these changes? These questions stem from perspectives in the life course (Elder, 1998), ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), and the growing consensus in child welfare for the need to move beyond overly simplistic explanations of the negative outcomes experienced by many care leavers after public care.

Methods This study employed retrospective life history methods in semi-structured interviews of care leavers between the ages of 21 and 35 in the United States. Each participant completed three interviews lasting 90 minutes, on average. At the conclusion of the interview participants were asked to place significant social events on a timeline, which spanned from birth to the present. The research team read one set of transcripts and identified themes. The themes were further refined and expanded through reading of an additional set of transcripts. The refined codes were placed in a codebook. Three team members then read and coded the remaining transcripts, meeting weekly to resolve discrepancies. A process of constant comparison was used to explore emerging themes within and across interviews and identify patterns in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Hunches were explored through memos and diagrams (Padgett, 1998).

Results Life histories illuminated a range of risk and protections in the participants' lives prior to foster care, including poverty, chaotic parenting, and abuse and neglect. During foster care, placement instability along with labels of being a "*ward,*" "*deviant,*" "*dysregulated,*" and/or "*insecure*" increased risks to development. As the child welfare system transitioned young people towards independent living new opportunities for mitigating risks and building protections emerged through employment, education, and new social relationships. These normative experiences in the transition to adulthood weakened risks, allowing participants to build critical protections before leaving care. Connecting the present with the past through a timeline had the effect of supporting participants to understand how much they had overcome in their lives.

Conclusion The ways in which care leavers overcome past adversity is poorly understood. Findings from this study suggest a need to redouble efforts to understand how to facilitate contexts in foster care that mitigate the accumulation of risks and strengthen assets over time. Providing young people with opportunities to link the timing of events with contexts may provide critical opportunities for making meaning about life histories.

Exploring understanding of Care Leaving through Life Course Theory – Linked lives and timing of lives; foster parent's views on aftercare and continuing relations in transition to adulthood

Prof. Inger Oterholm (VID Specialized University), Prof. Ingrid Höjer (University of Gothenbug)

Session chair: Judy Havlicek, Ph.D.

Objectives

Most young people in out-of-home care in Norway and Sweden live in foster homes. When the young person becomes 18, the care order ends but continuing support from the foster family is important both related to practical and emotional support, as well as providing possibilities for lasting relations. There is little research regarding foster parent's views about this stage of foster family life and how they view the young person's need for support. Which is the theme of this presentation.

In both Norway and Sweden, the foster care arrangement formally ends when the young person becomes 18. The placement can continue as an aftercare support measure until the youth turns 23 (from 202 until 25) in Norway (Child welfare act, 1992). In Sweden the law states that social services should provide support after the ending of a placement, but the legislation is vague. If the placement is done through a care-order (LVU), the placement can last until 21.

Further placement and/or support from the (former) carers require consent from both the young person and the foster parents. This situation could raise several sensitive and difficult subjects for the young person; "do the foster parents want me to be part of the family, are they only doing it for money" and so on. Furthermore, young people often want freedom and to manage on their own even if they are not ready to cope independently. In this complex situation it is vital to gain knowledge of foster parent's views and experiences. How they understand the perspective of the young person is important to develop relevant aftercare support.

Methods

The presentation is based on qualitative interviews with foster parents in Norway and Sweden about their experiences of aftercare support and considerations about the relation to the young person after they have left care. Our research questions are: How do foster parents experience the collaborations with child welfare/social services during the aftercare period. How do the foster parents understand the young person's needs and their own role and their relation to the young person after the placement has ended? The interview data is analysed using a life course perspective. This perspective underlines the interdependence of human lives, and especially the principles of "linked lives" emphasis this interdependence (Brady & Gilligan, 2019; Huthcison, 2019).

Findings

The findings suggest that foster parents want to support their foster youth after they have left care and that the young people need a lot of support in several areas. Still, the foster parents describe difficult situations when it comes to how they can support the young person, both in relation to lack of follow up from the social services and ambivalence on the part of the young person. Which also points to the importance of "timing of lives". The foster parents describe how their lives are linked with the young persons who formerly were placed in care, and how their relations continue to be both rewarding and struggling after the youth have left care.

The principles of "linked lives" and "timing of lives" captures important aspects of the relation between foster parents and young people in transition to adulthood. In the presentation we will elaborate the findings and discuss implications for practice.

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Exploring Understanding of the Care Leaving through Life Course Theory - The influence of relationships (past and present) on transition pathways

Prof. Emily Munro (Tilda Goldberg Centre for Social Work and Social Care, University of Bedfordshire)

Session Chair: Judy Havlicek

Background

Research has highlighted that young people leaving out of home care may experience '*accelerated and compressed*' transitions to adulthood. In a number of countries in the Global North, formal extended care schemes – permitting young people to remain with their former foster carers into their early 20s – have been introduced with the aim of facilitating more '*extended and graduated*' transitions to adulthood, and as a vehicle to improve outcomes. However, a range of factors will influence a) whether or not young people are *eligible* to remain with their former foster b) whether or not they choose to stay c) how long they stay. The presentation aims to explore these dynamics from a life course perspective drawing on the principles of 'human agency' and 'linked lives' (Elder, 1998). It will consider how pre-care and in-care experiences and current relationships influence decisions about the timing of transition and where young people go next.

Methods

Findings are drawn from a mixed methods study exploring implementation of extended care arrangements ('Staying Put') in England, including analyses of case record data and in-depth semi-structured interviews with 32 young people, 31 foster carers and 14 leaving care personal advisors.

Results

The study contributes to understanding of how child-foster care attachment relationships, as well as the legacy of the past influenced young people's decisions about whether or not to remain in foster care into early adulthood. Those with a secure stable base (Schofield and Beek, 2005) were more likely to opt to 'Stay Put', whereas those with more complex histories and/or who did not see themselves as 'part of the family' were more inclined towards 'survivalist self-reliance' and voted with their feet by moving to independence earlier. Identity issues and an enduring sense of loss following separation from their birth families and a desire to return 'home' resulted in abrupt departures from foster care for a small number of young people. These young people experienced complex transition pathways and high levels of instability when the lived reality of living with their birth families did not align with their hopes and arrangements broke down.

Conclusion

Life course theory offers a useful framework for understanding the complexities of the care leaving. Findings illuminate the importance of exploring transitions pathways with reference to the past not simply the present. Pre-care and in-care experiences, including continuities and discontinuities in secure and stable relationships during childhood, may (whether consciously or unconsciously) influence decisions concerning young people's transition pathways.

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Family bonds of foster children. A qualitative research regarding the experience of foster children in long-term foster care

Dr. Frank Van Holen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Ms. Delphine West (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Ms. Laura Gypen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Prof. Johan Vanderfaeillie (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Objectives

The present study focuses on how foster children placed in long-term family foster care in Flanders (Dutch speaking part of Belgium) experience the theme ‘family’.

Method

The study included children between the ages 12 and 18 years, placed in family foster care for at least six months, who fluently spoke and understood Dutch. A proportional stratified random sample was drawn, based upon all possible combinations of five variables: gender (male, female), age at the time of placement (before or after 6 years of age), type of placement (court-ordered, voluntary), type of foster family (kinship, non-kinship) and placement history (prior- or no prior placements). This led to 32 profiles which formed the sampling framework. As foster children corresponding with 15 profiles refused to participate, the final sample consisted of 27 respondents. Semi-structured interviews on the theme ‘family’ were used. To analyze data, thematic analysis was done.

Results

In general, foster children described the bond with their foster family as very positive. This general feeling of satisfaction was associated with four main themes: (1) Receiving good care and opportunities. (2) Doing things together, which strengthens the bond and develops a feeling of relatedness. (3) Good communication and mutual trust. (4) A warm and supportive environment. Despite the great satisfaction, foster children also mentioned several challenges: (1) The initial period after placement was not always without difficulty. (2) Occasionally arguments and conflicts in foster families formed a challenge. (3) Some foster children in kinship foster care talked about financial difficulties in the foster family and/or a severe illness of a foster parent.

In general, the presence of other (foster) children in the foster family was positively valued. A special bond often arose with other foster children when present.

The pragmatic and open-minded view of the term ‘family’ by foster children was also reflected in regarding other persons such as foster grandparents, foster aunts, foster uncles, foster cousins, and foster nieces as family. Some foster children also talked about having a special bond with a god mother or god father.

The bond between foster children and their biological family was complex, for many even problematic, yet still important. Not all respondents were satisfied with the visitation schedule. During visits often fun activities were done, although these were not uncommonly overshadowed by conflicts and problems. Although biological siblings were given a prominent place, the bond with those siblings was not by definition close. Furthermore, biological grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and god fathers and god mothers, were also important to foster children.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the importance and complexity of the term ‘family’ for foster children. Foster children feel at home in their foster family. They often believe that they fare better in their foster family than in the family of origin. The relationship with their biological family, including siblings, is more complex. They are missed but are also a source of sorrow. Creating a context in which both environments (foster family and family of origin) can contribute to a positive development of the foster child is therefore an important task for foster care workers.

Family contact and relationships for children in out-of-home care

Dr. Aino Suomi (Institute of Child Protection Studies, ACU)

Maintaining a positive relationship with birth family is fundamental for healthy development and wellbeing of children who are removed from their parents by child protection services. While there is an increasing understanding of the importance of family contact, the policy and practice around contact visits is scant and inconsistent and carers and parents report many difficulties related to the visits. The aim of the presentation is to discuss the most recent empirical evidence about contact needs of children in family-based care and how to improve contact experiences for everyone involved, considering the needs of the child. We present on two sets of longitudinal data on family contact collected recently in Australia: the NSW Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study and the kContact Study, a cluster randomised controlled study on a contact intervention. We will discuss in what ways research can be used to inform practice in the out-of-home care system and make recommendations for practitioners and policy makers how the views of children, birth parents and kinship/foster carers could be better integrated in decision-making about contact visits.

Family foster care in Portugal: Perceptions of Child protection professionals

Dr. Mariana Negrão (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa), Dr. Maria Ana Aranha (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa), Prof. Elisa Veiga (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa), Dr. Lurdes Veríssimo (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa), Dr. Marina Moreira (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa)

Family foster care (FFC) is the preferred out-of-home care measure for the protection of children and youth through Europe, in accordance with research findings of its superiority in meeting developmental needs of children and youth. Portugal, however, remains an unfortunate European exception of the implementation of FFC. Even after changes made to the law, prioritizing FFC, it represents only 2,7% of out-of-home placements (ISS-IP, 2020). Child protection professionals are good informers to reasons behind the low expression of FFC and to advise recommendations to help improve practices and stimulate change. Thus, the main goal of this exploratory and descriptive study is to understand the perceptions of Portuguese child protection professionals concerning FFC. 101 participants, from different professional backgrounds and child protection contexts, filled out a questionnaire. Main findings show a heterogeneous degree of familiarity to FFC, and a generally positive although reserved attitude to it. Professionals seem to value its child-centred approach and ability to promote child development and healthy attachment relationships, due to the benefits of a family environment. Participants identified regulations and procedures related to selection, evaluation, training, and support to foster families both as obstacles and necessary conditions for placement success, indicating important arenas where change urges. This insight into the professionals' perceptions of FFC, although exploratory, presents some clues to changes that are needed and processes that require reinforcement, by informants from 'within', who seem to be opened to the measure, needed of information and very much aware of its obstacles and needs. Thus, this study hopes to be a contribute to raise awareness and propel the necessary changes, in terms of regulations, procedures, and actual practices so that child protection services can provide more efficient and timely interventions for these vulnerable and attention worthy children and youth.

Family involvement in Residential Care - The perspective of Portuguese biological parents

Ms. Diana Matos (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa), Prof. Elisa Veiga (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa), Dr. Mariana Negrão (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa)

The family is a system where the child/ youth is inserted and assumes a position of great relevance in its development. It also has the role of ensuring that the child's physiobiological, cognitive and socio-emotional needs are assured because this is the only way to stimulate adequate development and the skills that the child needs to grow up. The family must ensure that such development is adjusted, complete and appropriate.

However, if families do not have conditions to promote or ensure the child's/ youth's safeguard and adequate development, there is a need for out of home placement. In Portugal, the most prevalent measure of out of home care is residential care, representing 86.9% of out of home placements (ISS-IP2020).

In residential care, intervention occurs not only with the child/ youth but also with the family, to promote an environment that is stable and safe, allowing the return of the child/ youth to their family. For this to happen, it is key that families are engaged, supported and trained in their parental responsibilities and competencies, strengthened their bond with the child/ youth (Pimentel, Ducharne & Rodrigues, 2016). Considering these goals, the intervention carried out by professionals should be family-centred and, as such, the family must be engaged and cooperate in the process. Family-centred intervention and parents' involvement are concepts not so well explored in literature from the perspective of the biological families. This has proved fragile because the articulation with the families, the contact with them and the critical perception of professionals about them, lead to difficulties in the relationship between parents and professionals and also to difficulties in parental involvement during the intervention process. It is therefore important to understand the parents' perception of their involvement and the intervention process to improve it.

This study becomes even more important in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic. These circumstances affected the contact between families and children in out of home care and the contact between the institution´s staff and families, with an impact on the intervention process. The pandemic has led to the adoption of isolation measures to fight the virus, to a prohibition of visits by parents to the child, as well as the impossibility of the child to go home. Children remained in the same space without contact with the outside, dealing with the change in routines, etc.

This exploratory study aims to analyse the parent's perception of their involvement in the intervention process carried out during the residential care of their children throughout the pandemic.

The sample of this study includes biological parents, whose children are in residential care homes in the northern region of Portugal and for at least 1 month.

Using a telephone interview, the perception of involvement in the intervention is explored, as well as the obstacles and facilitators for their involvement in the intervention plan before and after the pandemic. Data collection is still ongoing and will end in May 2021.

It is expected that the results obtained can contribute to the identification of variables that have an impact on parental involvement, to understand how professionals influence the involvement or non-involvement of parents in the intervention process and how the pandemic has affected and modified parents' involvement in the intervention process. These expected results can strengthen reflection and guidelines on the framework of family centred intervention with biological families in the residential care system.

Family Relationships - Perspective of Children and Youngsters in Residential Care

Dr. Ana Prata (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa), Dr. Mariana Negrão (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa), Prof. Elisa Veiga (CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa)

Currently, there are around 6129 children/youngsters in Residential Care in Portugal, being this the most used measure of out of home care, representing 85% of that population (ISS, 2020).

Due to their exposure to multiple traumas, these children/youngsters need a stable and personalized care (Coholic et al. 2009; Steenbakkers, Van Der Steen & Grietens, 2016), characterized by specific, flexible and multilayered services, capable to enhance a positive development. These children/youngsters are the best agents to convey their true needs so it's imperative that, not only their participation is properly valued, but also that their own voices are heard (Little, Axford & Morpeth, 2004). Reflecting and answering to these specific needs is one of the greatest challenges of the Protection System, and according to several authors (e.g., Delap, 2011; Rodrigues et al., 2014) until now, these have not been heard enough, which may suggest that there is no truly effective answer.

Considering the importance of family in the life of children/youngsters and the common goal of family reunification, it's extremely important to understand needs and perceptions of children/youngsters about their family relations, which can contribute to overcome difficulties and challenges in intervention plans. In this matter, we conducted an exploratory study, aimed at understanding the perception of children/youngsters about their family relationships, considering the relational environment with the Residential Care Home (RCH).

Nine children/youngsters between 14 and 20 years old, from a RCH for girls, in the North of Portugal participated in this study.

A qualitative methodological approach, encompassing semi-structured interviews and a photo elicitation process was used. This last method promotes a harmonious environment, stimulating more in-depth conversations, invoking feelings, memories and collective values, beliefs and meanings which allows a greater understanding of where the participant is inserted (Epstein, Stevens, McKeever & Baruchel, 2006; Harper, 2002). The interview script explored the topics related with the study aims: characterization of family relationship with children/ youngster's expectations, satisfaction, desired changes; family involvement in children/ youngster's life and RCH routines. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and a semi-inductive analysis, oriented by grounded theory, was conducted. Data management and codification process involved all the investigators and was supported by Nvivo 12.

The findings of the study show a paradox of challenge/satisfaction in the perception of family relationships. We observed that the involvement of the family in the life of children/youngsters and in the matters that concern them, despite being perceived as satisfactory, is also acknowledged that imply instability and challenges for children/youngsters, for RCH staff and preferred caregivers. In light of this, was also pointed out the importance of RCH staff to listening to the opinions of children/youngsters in the matters that concern them, safeguarding their rights and their sense of belonging. The study underlined also that the process of involving families by RCH is dependent of the challenge of individualizing the intervention, in order to meet the specific needs and enable the family to respond in a more adequate way.

Family-centered care in secure residential youth care in the Netherlands; child and family outcomes from a nation-wide study

Ms. Linde Broekhoven (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Ms. Annemarieke Blankestein (Radboud University Nijmegen)

Background: Out-of-home placements of adolescents can lead to a disruption of the caregiver-child relationship. This may result in negative outcomes for both children and their caregivers (in the broadest sense of the word, from here on referred to as parents). A family-centered approach in secure residential youth care might prevent a disconnection between adolescents and their parents and has the potential to improve outcomes for families. Family-centered care encompasses family-centered staff attitude and behavior as well as parental involvement during the residential treatment of adolescents. Both of these aspects of family-centered care are central to a nation-wide study carried out in Dutch secure residential youth care institutions (SRYC) between end of 2016 and 2019. Data-analyses are ongoing.

Objectives: The purpose of our studies is fivefold: 1) to gain insight into the degrees of family-centered staff attitude and behavior and parental involvement in SRYC in the Netherlands, 2) to determine whether the degree of family-centered staff attitude and behavior is related to the degree of parental involvement, 3) to establish whether degrees of family-centered staff attitude and behavior and parental involvement are related to outcomes of adolescents and families, 4) to establish if outcomes of families receiving an optional component of family-centered care, a systemic intervention (SI), during or after residential treatment, are related to the degrees of family-centered staff attitude and behavior and parental involvement, and 5) to assess whether the evidence base of the systemic interventions affected the relations.

Method: Over 400 families, whose adolescent child was placed in SRYC between 2016-2018, took part in our study. Information was gathered regarding background characteristics of the families, the level of family-centered care (attitude and behavior), the level of parental involvement, whether or not an SI was indicated and used, and adolescent and family outcomes (such as behavioral problems of adolescents, parental distress, problems in caregiver-child relationship, family empowerment, duration of placement, duration of SI). Parents, young people, and residential staff members (i.e., group care workers, psychologists) completed questionnaires at the start of the residential placement (T1), at the end of the residential placement (T2), and at six months follow-up (T3).

Results: Regression analyses showed that a higher degree of family-centered staff attitude and behavior was related to more parental involvement. However, no relationship was found between family-centered staff attitude and behavior and adolescent problem behavior. Moreover, group care workers reported some barriers in relation to involving parents. Additional analyses revealed that an SI was indicated in 71% of families (full sample), while only 21% of these families received an SI. In the subsample of families receiving an SI (n = 111), results revealed that higher levels of family-centered staff attitude and behavior predicted more parental distress, a shorter duration of the residential placement and a shorter duration of the systemic intervention. Higher levels of parental involvement predicted less family empowerment and a longer duration of the systemic intervention for these families. The strength of the evidence base of the SI affected some of these results.

Conclusions: Implementing family-centered care in SRYC institutions is helpful in enhancing parental involvement during the residential stay. However, family-centered staff attitude and behavior is not related to adolescent behavioral outcomes. Combining family-centered care in SRYC with SI could help reduce the length of residential stay and requires attention of staff to parental distress and family empowerment. The overall outcomes of our studies will be used to further improve care for adolescents in secure residential facilities.

Feasibility assessment of sleep health in children and youth as caregivers

Dr. Melinda Kavanaugh (University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee)

Background and Purpose: Sleep health issues are common among ‘informal family caregivers’, and is more prevalent than in the general adult population. However, these disruptions remain largely unknown in a vulnerable and isolated subset of caregivers – children and youth under the age of 18. These ‘young caregivers’ provide care across the disease spectrum and care need, including amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a disease with numerous complicated and intensive care needs. Caregiving impacts youth school attendance and performance, and managing their own mental well-being, yet the health effects, including sleep and stress, are largely unknown. This project sought to assess the feasibility of collecting sleep, stress and health data in young caregivers.

Methods: Quasi-experimental design, with age and gender matched treatment and control groups. Caregiving youth “treatment” (n=7) recruited via an ALS Multidisciplinary clinic and chapter of the ALS Association in the U.S. Non-caregiving youth (n=13) were recruited using snowball techniques and word of mouth via the research team. Participants wore an GENE-active actigraphy device, and kept a daily journal of all activities for 5 consecutive 24-hour periods. Study measures included demographics, caregiving tasks, Sleep Quality (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index), Self-reported bedtimes and awake times (disturbance), total sleep time (duration), and the number of minutes awake after sleep onset (latency)

Results: Feasibility was established, as all participants wore the watch and completed their journal for the full 5 days. Caregivers participated in an average of 7 caregiving tasks, including feeding, bathing, and transferring, for an average of 8 hours per day. Caregivers report worse sleep duration, more disturbance and latency, and overall poorer sleep quality than their caregiver counterparts. Caregivers also reported slightly higher rates of utilizing medications to help them sleep.

Conclusion: This data is the first known data on health and sleep in young caregivers, and may serve as a baseline to assess future cascading health impacts of care associated with caregiving in youth. Understanding how care disrupts sleep is critical towards lessening the potential for long-term impacts of caregiving on youth health and well-being, including obesity, anxiety and depression. Results have clear practice implications for health and social care providers to develop respite and sleep education interventions, in the context of targeted health and social interventions for isolated and vulnerable young caregivers.

Feasibility of studying care-leaving in African settings: Experiences from a four-country study

Prof. Berni Kelly (Queen's University Belfast), Prof. Adrian van Breda (University of Johannesburg)

Research on the transition from out-of-home or alternative care (e.g., residential, foster or kinship care) towards young adulthood (usually referred to as leaving care or care-leaving) has burgeoned in the Global North over the past decade or so, as evidenced by the larger numbers of papers on this topic at recent EUSARF conferences. However, research on care-leaving in the Global South has been sparse, with numerous countries having no or only one or two (English-language) publications, or only a dissertation or research report. Key exceptions to this are South Africa and Ghana, which have produced larger numbers of publications in the past few years. The limited publications is interesting given the very large numbers of children growing up in alternative care in most Global South countries.

This paper presents the results of a study conducted to determine the feasibility of conducting replicated research on care-leaving across four countries in Africa, viz. Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The presentation focuses on the methodological feasibility of doing such research, not on the data generated about leaving care. A research methodology, for both young people preparing to leave care and those who had left care some years previously, that was developed and has been extensively used in South Africa, was adapted for use across these four countries by a team of researchers from each of the countries, in partnership with SOS Children's Villages. The purpose of the study was determine how feasible it was to conduct this research in these contexts, with the added dimension of working alongside care-leavers as peer researchers. At least 10 young people participated in each country.

Findings reveal that multi-country research in Africa is challenged by factors such as language, cultural frameworks, national finances, geographical distances and transportation challenges and socio-political dynamics. The involvement of peer researchers added value to the study, but in some cases their availability was precarious due to financial, social and employment issues. Tools needed to be critically reviewed and adapted to ensure conceptual equivalence across country contexts. In various ways, these factors contributed to difficulties in proceeding smoothly with this research. However, once navigated, it was found that the actual study was able to be carried out without great difficulty and that rich and useful data could be generated. The paper will conclude with an overview of the key issues to consider when planning a study with care leavers in low- or middle-income countries to inform the ongoing advancement of the care-leaver research agenda in the Global South.

Feasibility trial of a video feedback parent-infant intervention for foster carers and children with attachment difficulties

Dr. Paula Oliveira (University College London), Ms. Lydia Barge (University College London), Ms. Eloise Stevens (Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families), Prof. Pasco Fearon (University College London)

Background. Children in care have often been exposed to multiple traumatic experiences, including maltreatment, separation and frequent changes in their carers, leaving them at heightened risk for mental health problems. These include difficulties in the realm of reactive attachment disorder (RAD), characterised by a failure in seeking or responding to comfort from carers when hurt or distressed, and social and emotional unresponsiveness. Despite the recognition of the vulnerability of this group of children and the importance of early intervention, there are no evidence-based interventions for this disorder, and foster children's access to psychotherapeutic interventions more generally varies widely (both across countries and within the UK).

Aims. The 'Nurturing Change' study is a feasibility randomised controlled trial (RCT) which aimed to a) adapt an existing video-feedback parenting intervention to be used with children in foster and kinship care in the UK, with attachment difficulties including those that can be labelled as RAD; and b) to examine the effectiveness and suitability of the newly modified intervention for 1 to 7 year old children in foster care in the UK with these difficulties.

Methods. The Video-feedback Intervention to promote Positive Parenting and Sensitive Discipline was adapted by an expert group for use in this context (the VIPP-Foster Care or VIPP-FC) and a team of intervenors was trained. The group of children in foster care who could take part was identified by participating local authorities across England. A series of case studies allowed us to pilot the newly modified intervention and research procedures. A new group of families was recruited into the RCT, with children and their foster or kinship carers randomised to either receive VIPP-FC or care as usual (CAU). Outcome measures were taken at baseline and at follow up (approx. 4 months after) with foster carers and the children in their care. These included observational and self-report measures of RAD symptoms, attachment security, the foster carer's sensitivity and other measures of the child's and the carer's functioning. Qualitative interviews were carried out with key stakeholders in the project (such as service managers and clinicians) and the foster carers who received the intervention.

Results. Out of more than 300 children invited to the study, the carers of nearly 100 children were initially screened for attachment difficulties using questionnaires. In addition to this low rate of questionnaire return, there were significant challenges with recruitment into the actual RCT, including children leaving their current placement, foster carer's refusal, or mismatch between the family's geographical location and availability of an intervener. Despite several potential solutions that were implemented to increase recruitment, only 30 (target was 40) families proceeded to be recruited into the RCT, with 15 allocated to each group. However, most other study parameters were deemed feasible and acceptable, particularly high levels of data and treatment completeness. Crucially, the revised intervention was positively received by practitioners and foster carers.

Discussion. The study highlighted the challenges of completing research in the foster care context in the UK. However, stakeholders were unanimous that research of this kind is urgently needed. A larger scale trial may be feasible, but only if recruitment barriers can be overcome. The documented insights from this trial will be able to inform future research in this area.

Feeling Different: The Meaning of Origin from the Perspective of Adopted Children

Prof. Stefanie Sauer (Brandenburgische Technische Universität Cottbus-Senftenberg)

Objectives

The paper introduces a research project's results concerning the course of international adoptions in Germany. Focus is set upon the meaning of the child's birth parents and its country of origin for the development of internationally adopted children in Germany.

Methodology Design

The study follows a triangular research design, which incorporates multiple perspectives on the research question of determinants for the growth of a stable parent-child-relationship and for the development of the adoptive child's identity in international adoptions. Subjective experiences and perspectives of central actors in the adoption process were researched by means of qualitative expert interviews with professionals of adoption agencies in Germany as well as problem-focused interviews with adoptive parents, adoptive children, and adult adoptees (in separated interviews). The data evaluation was conducted according to Philip Mayring's method of qualitative content analysis. Hereby, similarities and differences in experiences and perspectives of all interviewed participants were contrasted. Further, influencing factors for a successful parent-child-relationship and a positive identity development of the internationally adopted child were identified.

Results

Most internationally adopted children are affected by health burdens and have to cope with the separation from familiar people and their country of origin. Adoptive parents have to support their adoptive child in coping with the particular challenges connected to an international adoption. The majority of adoptive parents have a high degree of sensitivity for attachment processes. Hereby, the development of successful parent-child-relationships in adoptive families is enabled. However, exposed to the biological and cultural origin of the child, many families develop strategies, which are contradictory to the professional standards of adoption agencies as well as the needs and rights of the respective child. Adoptive parents multiply trivialize the meaning of the biological prehistory of the child, the meaning of birth parents, and the meaning of the country and the culture of origin for the child's development. In this context, the handling of missing information regarding the child's birth parents and the beginning of the child's life history is particularly volatile alongside with experiences concerning racism and discrimination due to a different outward appearance than the majority in Germany. Thus, the development of identity and the question of belonging appear to be difficult and ambivalent for many adoptive children.

Conclusions

Adoptive parents from internationally adopted children in Germany only receive limited professional support during and after the adoption. In order to guarantee the child's welfare, parents require professional counselling and advisory services, which are sensitive of diversity, fulfill the child's needs to learn about its biographical history, and integrate multiple experiences from the country of origin as well as Germany. Adoptive parents have to be supported in order to adequately decode the meaning of different cultural heritage for their adoptive child and their development as a bi-cultural family. Further, parents require help to support their adoptive child's self-understanding and self-acceptance as a child with double parenthood and cultural affiliation in order to contribute to an integrated self-concept of the adoptive child.

Female Care Leavers' Involvement in Pathway Plan In Ethiopia

Mr. Anduamlak Takele (Debre Markos University, Ethiopia)

Abstract

International research has shown the relevance of care leavers' participation in their pathway plan for their successful transition from care to emerging adulthood. Although countries in the Global North have formulated policies that entitled care leavers' the chance to plan their pathway plan with the help of a care plan advisor, many developing countries have no program that prepares care leavers for leaving care. Research on care-leaving in Ethiopia is at its infant stage and knowledge regarding how care-leavers' are participating in their path way plan so as to make their aftercare experience successful is almost nonexistent. A qualitative research design was employed to examine female care leavers' perspective towards their engagement in their pathway plan in 2017 in Ethiopia. Participants of the study were selected based on purposive sampling, and data were collected through in-depth interview and a review of documents. The generated data were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The study revealed that path way plan is not part of the institution's leaving care scheme and initiation of leaving care plan is done by female care leavers themselves without the help of a care plan advisor. Participants are not quite sure about their readiness to run their own life upon leaving care due to the sudden nature of their path way plan. Moreover, female care leavers are initiating the process of leaving care plan when they drop out of school, quarrel with care givers, and plan to marry someone. Female care- leavers have suggested the need to put path way plan as a component of the institution's rehabilitation scheme and organize a team that would be in charge of care leavers' pathway plan assessment. This article sheds light on the issue of supporting care leavers' attempt to navigate the adult world in their won and to prepare well for an adult life when they leave care in Ethiopia.

Key Words

Care leaving, pathway plan, care plan advisor, female care leavers in Ethiopia.

Fields of Action (Family Foster Care). Enduring relationships & commitment: Experiences of adolescent entrants & foster carers

Ms. Emma Speer (University of East Anglia)

Background

This PhD research is supervised by Professor Gillian Schofield in the Centre for Research on Children and Families (CRCF) at the University of East Anglia (UEA) and aims to answer questions regarding the role of relationships between adolescent entrants to foster care and foster carers.

Adolescent entrants, in this research, are defined as young people who enter, or re-enter foster care aged eleven or older. Adolescents continue to be the largest group of young people in the English care system, however, there remains a lack of sufficient research acknowledging the challenges and rewards of fostering adolescent entrants, who are likely to have established patterns of behaviour and strong ties to their birth family. There is limited research in particular relating to the experience of foster carer commitment to adolescent entrants and the experience of the young people, though there is some evidence of the importance of supportive relationships and a sense of belonging for adolescents in foster care.

Objectives

This focus on the role of relationships builds on the researcher's MRes research which explored the experiences of foster carers caring for adolescent entrants. Key findings revealed the importance of relationship-building and suggested foster carers often experience a high level of commitment to the adolescents in their care. Being able to 'stick' with the young person was evident through a commitment that enabled an enduring relationship which transcended the initial foster placement, including in some cases continuing beyond a difficult disruption. The nature of enduring relationships and commitment have been researched with regards to foster carers' experiences of caring for young infants or adolescents who have grown up in foster care (adolescent graduates). The differences in levels of commitment between foster carers and residential care providers who care for adolescents has also been examined in research. These concepts, however, have not been examined specifically in relation to the experiences of adolescent entrants and foster carers.

This research aims to develop conceptual and theoretical insights into how relationships and commitment are experienced by adolescent entrants and their foster carers. This exploration of an undervalued and under-researched area of foster care practice will challenge the current policy preoccupations with organisational and service outcomes for children and young people in care which equate placement endings with the end of relationships. Instead this study will assist in broadening, re-framing and reconceptualising the notion of foster care for adolescent entrants by positioning care-giving and outcomes through the lens of committed relationships.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews are being conducted (July 2019 – June 2020) with 10-15 adolescent entrants and the same number of foster carers in the East of England. Some matched pairs of foster carers and adolescent entrants may be interviewed; however, the aim of these interviews is not to triangulate information between young people and the foster carers who care for them, rather it is to explore their individual experiences of the adolescent entrant/foster carer relationship, which could include past relationships. Grounded theory will be used for analysis and to yield new theory from the data generated.

Initial Findings

This PhD is currently in the middle of the data generation stage; however, the poster presentation will include initial findings from the interview data. These initial findings will focus in particular on the perspective of the adolescent entrant to foster care. For example, the theme of enduring relationships and the enduring*impact* of relationships, even when the relationship itself does not endure have been emerging themes across the data collected thus far.

Fighting like a lion – How foster and adoptive parents fight for the needs and interests of their children

Prof. Yvonne Gassmann (OST Ostschweizer Fachhochschule, Department of Social Work)

The paper explores how foster parents and adoptive parents can advocate for the needs and interests of their children and represent the children's perspective.

Background: Foster parents and adoptive parents find themselves in a field of tension in which the needs and interests of the children mix with those of the parents. Both, children and parents, are always (emotionally) vulnerable and (can) experience injuries. Parents fight for the children, with them and sometimes against them. Being vulnerable belongs to intergenerational care relationships; something happens to the older and younger in bi-subjective relationship, in bi-subjective happening and acting (cf. Winkler 2006, p. 174).

In families, children and parents have a need for security. Close emotional relationships are supposed to offer emotional support and protection. While the child needs a secure attachment to be able to explore, the parents / care givers also bring along attachment experiences and needs. Depending on the age of the child / young person, the care givers can, for example, activate experiences and expectations that they had at the time when they themselves were that age (cf. Brisch 2019, p. 28). There is implicit knowledge about such fragile processes. The diffuse term "hurt feelings" can be associated with a number of associations, for example.

Research methods: Monthly e-mail surveys over the course of a calendar year provided indications of conditions and dynamics in this challenging field of tension. A total of 36 questions were answered by 13 foster mothers and 3 foster fathers (of which 3 couples), 19 adoptive mothers and 10 adoptive fathers (of which 7 couples) and 12 "other" mothers.

Among other things, they were asked about protective actions, more precisely about fighting for the child.

Question (example): Have you ever had to fight once (or more than once) like the legendary lion for your foster child/child (one or more of your foster children/children)? What did you have to protect the child(ren) from? What do you think about the topic of fighting for children and protecting them?

Results: Protecting and fighting can be in response to injuries that the child has experienced. At the same time, protecting and fighting has the potential to cause injury. Mothers and fathers expose themselves and they may be patronizing to the child. Balances are achieved in this field of tension. The needs and interests of the children perceived by the foster and adoptive parents change over time. Different time horizons are of importance here. There is a lot to be said for considering adjustments and constantly new assessments of the parents as the actual resource for the children. At the same time, a possible limit to the representation of the children's perspective and child-related needs and interests is found in parents own vulnerability. In the presentation, it will be discussed where opportunities and limits are in the close emotional network of relationships with regard to the question of a consistent recording and representation of the children's perspective.

Literature:

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Fitting In and Getting On: Journeys into University for Care Experienced Students

Dr. Katie Ellis (The University of Sheffield), Ms. Claire Johnston (The University of Sheffield)

Accessing higher education can be an important marker of success for young people, yet research estimates that only around 12 percent of young people leaving care go on to study at university. In a climate of 'widening participation' in which universities encourage inclusion and student diversity, this paper shares the perspectives of care experienced students on their transitions from care to university. Data was collected from 234 care experienced students from 29 universities, using in-depth interviews and online surveys. Our research found that students almost unanimously reported being excited to start university and perceived it to be 'a new chapter' in their life, where they could 'be like everybody else'. Despite their initial excitement, many participants described feeling marked out as 'different' from other students. 28 percent arrived at university on their own, often feeling isolated and excluded. 68 percent of participants reported that they experienced mental health difficulties whilst at university and 51 percent seriously considered dropping out. This paper shares the everyday experiences of care experienced students at university and explores their perspectives around university culture, making friends and 'fitting in'.

Formal and Informal Kinship Care Systems - Exploring Gaps in our Knowledge

Prof. Robbie Gilligan (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin), Dr. Graham Connelly (CELCIS, University of Strathclyde), Dr. Louise Hill (Children 1st)

Kinship care of children is widely practiced and takes a range of forms.

In a recent paper, a distinction was drawn between formal and informal kinship care where formal represents kinship placements for children within the formal (public) care system and informal represents types of kinship care arrangements where the child lives with kin but outside the formal care system (Hill, Gilligan and Connolly, 2019). There is evidence that both forms of kinship care are growing in importance in many jurisdictions. Whether established or emerging, kinship care faces many challenges including an under–developed evidence base.

While formal kinship care has been the subject of considerable research , there are many aspects of both forms of kinship care which remain under-researched by child welfare scholars. It remains difficult to answer many questions. Some examples include: How has kinship care policy and provision evolved in different countries? What has influenced different developments in different contexts? What helps explain different rates of *formal* kinship care in different countries? How do state systems interact with informal kinship care, if at all? Under what conditions may there be financial support available to carers? What are the support needs of formal and informal kinship carers and of the children cared for? What models of professional help are most relevant for formal and informal carers? To what extent do children have opportunities to influence adult decisions about placements in kinship care?

This presentation will argue that, overall, kinship care should be viewed in a comprehensive and integrated way as a set of approaches by public care systems and private families to providing care to children without parental care. There will be special attention to the importance of the presence or absence of systems of public and professional supports, and to the emerging voice of kinship carers in a number of countries.

This paper will draw on research from the authors' own studies and evidence in the wider literature, and also on emerging policy developments in Ireland and Scotland. It will suggest that child welfare scholars should pay this area increasing attention while also recognising the potential added value offered by cross - national perspectives in better understanding the potential and challenges of kinship care (Hill, Gilligan and Connolly, 2019; Munro and Gilligan, 2013) .

Foster care for unaccompanied refugee children in the Netherlands; what about the placement success?

Dr. Elianne Zijlstra (University of Groningen), Mrs. Jet Rip (University of Groningen), Dr. Wendy Post (University of Groningen), Prof. Margrite Kalverboer (University of Groningen), Prof. Erik Knorth (University of Groningen)

Objective: There is hardly any knowledge on the outcomes of foster placements of unaccompanied refugee children (Hek, 2007; Ni Raghallaigh & Sirreyeh, 2015). Especially, knowledge on the stability of foster placements for unaccompanied refugee children is lacking. Because placements in regular foster care change and develop over time, including the occurrence of placement breakdowns (Fernandez, 2009; Vanderfaeillie et al., 2012; Van Ooijen, 2010), the need for a study focusing on the stability of foster placements for unaccompanied refugee children is indicated (Rip et al., 2020a). This study explores the association between the success of foster placements for unaccompanied refugee children and cultural, child and fostering factors, and examines the stability of these factors over time.

Method: Data have been collected on three measurement occasions. During the baseline measurement (T0) 39 children with their carers (N=37) and guardians (N=37) were included. Measurements at T1 (N=29) and T2 (N=17) took place one and two years later, respectively. Children and carers were visited at their homes, where they filled out several questionnaires (e.g., SDQ, BIC, SLE, RATS, AHIMSA, and questionnaires measuring bio/demographic variables, success and [cultural] characteristics of the placement). The guardians were approached by e-mail and requested to fill out a digital questionnaire. Data were analysed with univariate and logistic regression techniques.

Results: Results at T0 show that the quality of the relation between children and foster carers strongly corresponds with the success of the placement. For children, cultural similarity between children and foster families was quite important in relation to the success of the placement. However, for foster carers and guardians, cultural similarity was less related to placement success. In addition, the presence of prosocial behaviour (according to children), the absence of externalizing behaviour problems (according to carers), and the presence of a good caregiving environment (according to guardians) were predicting the most successful placements (Rip et al., 2020b).

Results at T1 show that when children remained in the same foster family over time, most placements proved to be stable regarding the success of the placement as well as the child and fostering factors, according to the perspectives of children, carers, and guardians. Solely, children's social-emotional problems according to carers showed a significant increase over time. For children in disrupted placements child factors remained stable or improved over time (according to the child's perspective). Moreover, looking back at T0-results, differences were noticed between the group that was still living in the same foster family at T1 and the group that was living elsewhere at T1; according to the foster carers' and guardians' perspectives the first group fared better during T0. The analysis of results at T2 is in progress.

Conclusion: Most continuing foster placements for unaccompanied refugee children show relatively stable child and fostering factors. However, there is an increase in children's social-emotional problems according to carers over time. The appreciation of cultural similarity between child and carers differs re the three perspectives and shows fluctuation over time. Cultural matching of children and foster carers not only reveals benefits. Considering the sample size, results should be interpreted with caution.

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Foster care youths with severe behavioral problems in specialized residential centers: Factors influencing treatment progress

Dr. Marta Sabate (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)), Dr. Laura Arnau Sabatés (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB))

Objectives

This study aims to identify the factors that have an influence on the treatment progress of foster care youths with severe behavioral problems who were fostered in the Intensive Educational Residential Centers (CREI) of Catalonia (Spain), a type of Therapeutic Residential Care (TRC) facilities.

Specifically, this study wants to focus on the factors that may have influenced the improvement of the youth's behavior while they were in the CREI, especially, those who performed positively to the treatment progress in the centers.

Behavioral problems are a frequent concern among the children in the welfare system. Standard residential facilities are not prepared to tackle the specific needs of these youths with challenging behaviors, so they tend to be placed in therapeutic residential centers. However, in Catalonia, these youths are placed in the CREI, a specialized residential treatment facility.

CREIs foster youths aged between 12 and 18 years old, protected by the Catalan Government, who need a temporary and intensive educational treatment because of their behavioral problems.

This project arose from a request from the Catalan Government, who wanted to identify the profile of the attended population and the influencing factors in the treatment progress in order to optimize the implemented intervention.

Method

We used a cross-sectional design implementing quantitative methods to analyze the treated population and the impact of some variables related to the treatment progress made in a specific time span. All data was collected retrospectively. 206 cases (182 boys and 24 girls) aged between 12 to 18, who represented the entire population treated in the CREIs over three years, were analyzed. A questionnaire was created and was answered by the professionals who treated the youths while in CREIS. It is aimed at gathering data related to their profile on entry, substance abuse, criminal offences, runaways while in the CREI and treatment progress. The information was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques (Chi square, T-test and logistic regression).

The research process was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Results

Data revealed significant statistical differences among profiles by sex, background, criminal record, substance use, and mental health issues. Furthermore, youths who showed a positive treatment progress came to the CREI at an earlier age and stayed longer than the group with a non-remarkable treatment progress.

By comparison, youths who performed an unremarkable treatment progress were those who had mostly abused substances, committed offences and had runaway while treated in the CREI.

Logistic regression showed that the length of time spent in the CREI and running away foretold the youth's treatment progress.

Conclusions

The research concluded that the CREI treatment has a positive impact only on the milder cases and it is not typically successful for youths dealing with greater difficulties. On this basis, we think it is necessary to plan an integral treatment program that considers all aspects of the youth's lives, including specific substance abuse programs in order to facilitate their social integration out-of-care. Along with the youth's intervention, it is

also fundamental to plan a program with the families while their youths are in the CREI as it would help them understand and cope with the situation. On the other hand, there is no information about youths once they exit the CREIs, therefore, it is crucial to design a systematic monitoring plan that would allow to assess the impact of the treating program.

Foster cared youth's education in high school: A descriptive analysis to enhance the professional practice

Ms. Judit Rabassa (University of Barcelona), Dr. Nuria Fuentes Peláez (University of Barcelona)

- **Objectives:**

The main objective of the study is to identify the educational needs of foster cared youth students to propose guidelines address to high school professionals who are involved in the educational support of youth in care.

- **Method:**

An ad-hoc questionnaire of 51 questions was designed for this research and it was edited on-line. The questionnaire aimed to collect professional's perspective about: a) schooling of youth in care; b) foster family or residential centre and the relationship with school and, c) the support given to the youth from high schools to these students. The questionnaire has open, multiple-choice and close questions in a scale from 0 to 7.

High School professionals from Catalonia (educational counsellors, teachers, educational psychologists, and professionals from special education services), who were involved in the education of youths in care, were invited to answer the questionnaire through Catalan Association of Psycho-pedagogy and Orientation (ACPO).
Finally, 23 professionals of high school education from Catalonia participate in the study. These professionals have attended to 162 youths in care during their professional experience. The professionals answered the questionnaire regarding their experience with these youths.

- **Results:**

According to the professionals, the results reveal that about 43.83% youths are in a *school grade appropriate to their age*, however 38.27% are in a *lower school grade according to their age*, which means that an important number of these students *don't pass the assessments to promote to the next grade* (38.17%). In addition the majority of the students in care (69.74%) who moving on from one grade to the next *need addittional and special education supports*to achieve it. Specifically, the professionals asses that these students show difficulties in *executive functions* (M=2.85).
Nevertheless, the main difficulties of these students are focused in *behavioural and emotional self-regulation*such as low *self-esteem and self-confidence*(M=2.6) and low *mistake acceptance* (M=2.7). However, professionals express that *emotional* (69,57%) *and behavioural support* (60,87%), as well as *giving support to get over the consequences derived from abuse and parental neglect experiences*(60,87%), are the areas where professionals need more training.
On the other hand, these youths have good social skills to *stablish relationships with others*(M=3.85), and to *be accepted by their peers*(M=3.85).
Professionals consider foster parents or professionals from the residential center as a valuable resource to help professionals to *identify distress signs*because of their family situation (M=5.81), to *provide effective supports through exchanging strategies* (M=5.52), and *to know their needs and capabilities to design adjusted educational plans* (M=5.52).
Professional's educative intervention to assist youth in care include applying *specific supports and curricular diversification* (M= 5.35), design of educational *personal plans* (M=5.25), and the introduction of *flexible assessment systems suitable with their needs*(M=5.50).
Finally, professionals agree on the need to intensify the social emotional learning interventions in the high school and to increase professional training to handling difficult behaviours and support to these youths.

- **Conclusions:**

1. High schools must intensify positive emotional and behavioural supports to these students. Concurrently, professionals need continuous training to be able to give this emotional and behavioural support.
2. The existence of special education needs on these students, must deploy high school professionals to design learning and teaching plans adjusted to the needs and capabilities of youths in care students from an inclusive based approach, considering personalized learning methods combined with additional specific supports if required, in collaboration with foster family, education community and childcare system services.
3. More studies are required to explore the differences between youth in family foster care, and youth in residential care, to characterise the educational interventions and to identify the conditions of the most effective ones.

Foster children's participation: their points of view

Dr. Amélie Turlais (Université Paris Nanterre), Ms. Elodie Faisca (Université Paris Nanterre), Dr. Euillet Séverine (Université Paris Nanterre), Dr. Claire Ganne (Université Paris Nanterre)

Both European and national conventional and legislative context aims to develop and strengthen the participation of those involved in child protection, in particular children. Taking into consideration the perspective of the protected child's in research and practice is increasing by questioning children involvement and participation in their different living environments (Fox & Berrick, 2007; Havlieck et al., 2018). However, existing researches show that children would like their voices to be heard more (Arbeiter & Toros, 2017; Robin, 2010, van Bijleveld et al., 2015).

In foster care, involving the child in decisions affecting him/her raises many institutional, ethical and professional issues. The entanglement between the conception of participation and the decision-making process is particularly relevant in a child protection context (Van Houte et al., 2015). Adult perceptions of children's capacity to participate in decision-making (Leeson, 2007) as weel as in assessing their situation are heightened by some perceptions of the 'educational risks' in this participation (Rurka, 2019). Thus, children's participation would require prerequisites at different levels such as: society (Rurka & Defays, 2011), public policy (Lacroix, 2016), institution (Lacharité, 2015) and professionals (Cazottes, 2016; Knorth et al., 2002; Robin, 2012; Sellenet, 2012). Moreover, children's participation would go beyond individual and/or dual considerations in educational relationships, and would require thinking 'as a whole' (Serbati, 2017). However, there is a many recent researches reporting on the positive effects of the participation of the protected child on his/her subjective well-being (Maaskant, 2016; Streuli et al., 2009, Di Marino et al., 2018, Rafeedie et al., 2019).

While conducting two research studies in the field of educational sciences, 11 foster children between 7 and 10 years old were interviewed in a semi-directive technique to gather their views on their participation. Through a thematic analysis of the discourse it was highlighted 2 spheres of participation for children: daily life and the protection measure. The possibility of participation emerges as a prerequisite for the modalities of expression, the degrees of knowledge of the institutional functioning and the relations with adults. These results make it possible to draw out both theoretical perspectives on children's agency and participation in child protection, as well as reflexive avenues on participative professional practices.

Foster families' perceptions of children repatriated from war zones

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French child protection services are now faced with the task of accompanying and caring for repatriated children who have lived in the Iraqi-Syrian war zones. The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) focuses on the repatriation of these children at risk and their need of protection regarding their dramatic living conditions, emphasising "the best interests of the child". The socio-political, historical and diplomatic aspects posed by the "return" of these children (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018; Baranger & Eliacheff, 2019) are also mobilised by the child protection professionals who are assigned to take care of these children on a daily basis.

In the framework of a research in educational sciences still in progress, 13 foster parents were met before the child repatriated from the Iraqi-Syrian conflict zone was placed in their family. In these interviews investigating how foster parents were projected this placement, their discourse contains a part of their imagination about these children, to be welcomed in their homes in the near future. Interviews following the reception of the children are currently being carried out.

A thematic analysis highlighted many projective ambivalences among the foster families, nourished by social and media discourse, their own relationship to situations of war and violence, and their past experiences as a foster family.

Several axes contribute to the elaboration of this imaginary child: material conditions considered as terrible but which can be counterbalanced by the hope of supportive educational and emotional conditions. Doubts about the degree to which these children are exposed to acts of violence, torture or crime also implying the possible involvement of these children in these acts. Even if these children are perceived first and foremost as victims, who must absolutely be protected, references - however unspeakable - to armed conflict, terrorism and radicalisation give rise to fears about the potentially violent behaviour of these children.

These foster parents try to find a balance between "a child like any other" and a child "who has special needs", particularly in view of the many uncertainties linked to his or her state of health, but also linked to the needs expressed or not by the children that professionals will have to meet. In a fairly transversal way, the context of uncertainty contributes to the feeling of having to "tame" these children, perceived as inevitably traumatised (by previous living conditions and by arrival and/or return to France) (Fratto, 2016). A whole imaginary world full of affects also surrounds the moment of the child's arrival on French soil, and therefore the experience of separation from one of his or her parents, but also as a sign of culture shock, constituting a rupture, a split between past and future (Brown, 2009).

Even if research and knowledge do exist on the imagination of the foster child, the specificity of the socio-historical context surrounding these children contributes to multiply the projections and anxieties tenfold, even before the child's arrival. Thus, these elements of analysis invite us to identify avenues of work for the professionals directly concerned, but also avenues of research to be conducted on the weight of these social images on the child and also on the systems and practices deployed with them.

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Foster parents’ basic psychological needs satisfaction and frustration as predictor of autonomy supportive parenting and the functioning of foster children

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Introduction

Self-determination theory (SDT), a general theory of human motivation, has been applied to domains such as health, parenting, work and sport. SDT-research in parenting focuses on parents’ perception of satisfaction or frustration of the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness as a condition for optimal parenting: parenting high on autonomy support, structure and involvement. Indeed, many studies have shown the positive effects on the emotional, behavioural and cognitive functioning of children of parenting high on the latter three dimensions.

Although the validity of the SDT-model in non-problematic biological child-parent and student-teacher relations was confirmed, SDT has not been tested in foster care. In this study the association of basic psychological needs satisfaction and frustration of foster parents with foster parents’ autonomy-supportive parenting, providing structure and involvement, and in turn the association of the latter dimensions of parenting with the functioning of the child was examined.

Methods

97 foster mothers filled in several questionnaires measuring their basic psychological needs satisfaction and frustration (in general and in relation with the foster child), the level of autonomy-supportive parenting, structure provision and involvement, and the functioning of the foster child. The respective questionnaires were: Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale, Basic Need Satisfaction in Relationship Scale, Parenting Questionnaire and the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire. Mediation between basic psychological needs satisfaction and frustration and functioning of the foster child by the three parenting dimensions was assessed with the procedure of Baron and Kenny (1986).

Results

Contrary to our expectations, functioning of the foster children was not associated with autonomy-supportive parenting and structure. Functioning was only associated with psychological control, as opposed to autonomy-supportive parenting and involvement. In addition, no mediation of the relationship of basic psychological needs satisfaction and frustration of foster parents with the functioning of the foster child by the three parenting dimensions was found.

Discussion

Although research in parenting in many studies validated SDT and confirmed the hypotheses inferred from it, in this study all hypotheses were falsified. One possible explanation is that the SDT-model assumes bidirectional effects between parenting behaviour and child behaviour. However, several foster care researchers failed to find the assumed bidirectional relations and only found evidence for unidirectional effect of (problematic) foster child behaviour on foster parents’ parenting behaviour (e.g., Goemans, van Geel, & Vedder, 2018; Vanderfaeillie, Van Holen, Trogh, & Andries, 2012). These findings question the way foster parents should help the foster children they care for.

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Foster Services for Children with Disabilities: Update and New Programmatic Directions

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Study Background

In recent years, Israel's Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Services (MOLSA) reorganized and established a Disabilities Administration. The subsequent system-wide change affected also foster services for children with disabilities and made it necessary to develop precise responses. JDC-Ashalim and the Disabilities Administration initiated improvement measures and asked the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB) to perform a study to provide updated data and help identify new directions of development.

Goals

The goal of the study was to describe the staff positions and modus operandi of Israel's foster services for children with disabilities, evaluate their suitability for the needs of the children and the foster and birth families, and help identify avenues of improvement. The research questions were:

1. What is the structure of the positions and modus operandi of the current foster services for children with disabilities?
2. What are the main characteristics of these foster children and their birth families?
3. What are the main challenges/difficulties of the foster array of services for children with disabilities?
4. What are the main areas of service requiring special development for foster children with disabilities, and how to develop them?

Methodology

The study included a quantitative survey of 86 foster coordinators relating to 542 foster children with disabilities, and their foster and birth parents, conducted from April to June, 2019. Additionally, nine semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 11 figures involved in foster services, and two foster families of children with disabilities. Data were also obtained from a study day initiated and organized by JDC-Ashalim.

Findings

The study provides an updated picture of the foster services for children with disabilities, the characteristics of the foster children and foster and birth families, and data on the relationship between foster children and their birth families. For instance, we found that the foster services developed specific units for children and adults with disabilities, headed by a separate coordinator. Most of the children with disabilities handled by the foster services are 21 and under, about 20% are over 22. Their disabilities and levels of functioning are diverse. The role of foster families is complex, demanding great availability, dedication and investment. Orthodox families are overrepresented among foster families vis-à-vis their proportion of the general population, and birth families are more vulnerable than foster families.

Conclusions

The study identified subgroups requiring a specific response and the development of expertise, such as fostering by relatives. It also identified seven areas to develop in foster services for children with disabilities: the construction and accessibility of a body of knowledge on disabilities, rights and services; recommendations on reinforcing support for foster families of children with disabilities; improved recruitment of foster families for children with disabilities; the development of alternative models of supportive communication with foster children with disabilities; improvement of the relationship of foster children with their birth families; ensuring the children's transition to optimal arrangements in adulthood; a structured array of specific positions in the foster service for children with disabilities and reinforcement of their training. These areas are integrated and affect one another. It is therefore recommended that they be developed simultaneously.

The study took place some three years after Israel's Adoption Law was amended in 2016. The amendments included recognition of the importance of involving children with disabilities in decisions about their lives. Finally, while the importance of direct communication with the children and the development of such skills did filter down to professionals in fostering, they appear to lack the knowledge and means for satisfactory performance.

Foster Youth in Higher Education: The Importance of Reconstructing Family on a College Campus

Dr. Sean Hogan (California State University, Fullerton)

Background and Purpose: Foster youth transitioning to adulthood through higher education face many challenges related to social and emotional support. Familial supports available to traditional college students are lacking or absent for most foster youth students, particularly those who are leaving the foster care system and entering a post-secondary educational experience at a four-year university or college. This study explored the social relationship-making experiences of foster youth student during their first-year at a four-year university. Emphasis was placed on newly developed relationships with peers, mentors, and campus support program participants and staff.

Methods: This qualitative study interviewed 30 former and current foster youth at the end of their first academic year at a four-year university in the United States. Study participants were recruited with the assistance of child welfare and post-secondary campus support programs in southern California. Using an original 6-item semi-structured qualitative interview schedule, foster youth students were asked to describe the relationships they had made during their first year at the university. Study participants were also asked about the types of supports they found most helpful or lacking during their first-year experience.

Results: A common theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of developing a sense of family while on a college campus. Many foster youth students expressed an unmet need for family-like relationships in their lives and referenced seeking familial support during their first-year experience. Prominent in this role was participation in campus support programs and other campus-based organizations. Many study participants referenced the importance of campus support program peers and staff in establishing or recreating a sense of family in their lives. Lastly, foster youth students who struggled to develop new social relationships expressed greater challenges toward persistence to the next academic year.

Conclusions and Implications: For foster youth in higher education, developing and replacing social relationships that may have been lost or compromised during their transition away from the foster care system is important to a successful college experience. The most critical factor toward social, emotional, and academic success for foster youth students may be reconstructing a sense of family while in a university setting. Recognition of this need by student support service providers and administrators may result in campus-based programs designed to facilitate the development of pseudo-familial relationships and support mechanisms for foster youth students, thereby leading to improved educational and life outcomes for this unique student population.

Framework for a group intervention aiming at coping with out-of-home placement – Focus groups in residential foster homes

Mr. Steffen Läntzsch (University of Ulm), Prof. Jörg M. Fegert (Univeristy of Ulm), Dr. Elisa Pfeiffer (Univeristy of Ulm), Prof. Miriam Rassenhofer (Univeristy of Ulm), Dr. Andreas Witt (Univeristy of Ulm)

Out-of-home placement is a critical life event for affected children and adolescents. We explored the potential content and conditions for a group intervention aiming at coping with this critical life event by the means of 3 focus groups with n=13 participants. The participants reported feelings of guilt, uncertainty concerning their future, experiences of loss, and lack of confidence. So far, standardized programs for sharing the participants' out-of-home care experiences had not been established in their child welfare programs. Under certain circumstances, the participants were willing to take part in a group intervention for this purpose. The intervention should aim at the autobiographical integration of the out-of-home placement as well as the promotion of general protection factors. Further qualitative research is needed to adjust the intervention in order to fit the needs of the target population.

From child in care to employee: Scope for action of adolescents and guardianship authorities in Zurich, 1950 to 1990

Prof. Nadja Ramsauer (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences), Dr. Susanne Businger (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences)

From the fifties to the nineties, guardianship authorities in the Canton of Zurich were keen to integrate young people in care into the labour market. Their career aspirations were limited by gender and class, especially in the fifties and sixties, whereas at the same time economic prosperity opened up a new range of possibilities for young people in care to distance themselves from the aspirations of their guardians.

Between the seventies and the eighties, a more consultative approach was being established by the authorities. Their focus shifted slowly from the presumed neglectful behaviour of parents to the so called «best interests of the child» and the adolescents well-being. At the same time, the guardianship authorities were still prepared to take drastic measures against young people they perceived as being rebellious. Even the new approaches to family support that emerged during this period do not disguise the fact that the perspective of minors was not sufficiently taken into account when it came to choosing a profession.

Along two case histories of a female and a male adolescent, one from the 1950s and one from the 1980s, we would like to show what measures the authorities took and what their perceptions were of young people in care who were coming of age. Gender-specific arguments played an important role. We would also like to show the extent to which the young people had room for manoeuvre, not only with regard to their choice of career, but also relating to their life plan. For example, they expressed the wish to be able to learn a very specific profession or to complete their training outside residential care. Often the authorities interpreted this as arrogance, which was, from their point of view, not appropriate to the social status of the family of origin.

The two case histories will be presented from a qualitative, discourse-analytical point of view. In our study, which was published in 2019, qualitative and quantitative approaches were combined. In the quantitative part, we looked at the reasons given by the authorities for placing young people in care. In our presentation, however, we focus on qualitative case analysis in order to highlight the perspective of the young people, which is documented in the archive materials.

Publication to which reference is made: Susanne Businger, Nadja Ramsauer, «Genügend goldene Freiheit gehabt», Heimplatzierungen von Kindern und Jugendlichen im Kanton Zürich, 1950 – 1990, Zürich 2019, Chronos Verlag.

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Topic

Historical and theoretical approaches (1)

Residential child care (8)

Transition to adulthood (16)

Format

This is an individual submission for paper presentation in oral communication.

From foster care to adulthood: main findings and clinical implications from After Reform School Study

Dr. Marko Manninen (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)

Chair: ?

Presenting author: Marko Manninen

280 words

Objectives Reform school system (RS) in Finland works with adolescents with severe behavioral problems like juvenile delinquency, substance use and severe school dysfunction. After reform school study (ARSS) provides reliable information on the adult age outcomes and presents clinical guidelines.

Methods Quantitative data study. The RS subjects (N=1160) are organized in five cohorts: 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 or 2011. In addition, a matched comparison group (N=5678) was obtained. Data was combined from numerous national registries.

Results Adults with RS background have 7-fold all-cause premature mortality rate compared to their general population peers, and the risk for substance-related death is 24-fold. RS background associates with a wide array of mental health problems with Hazard Rates (HR) ranging from 4 to 45 depending on the psychiatric diagnosis group. RS population uses psychotropic drugs 4-7 times more than their general population peers, but participation in state-provided psychotherapy appears to be rare. Four out of five RS subjects has basic education only, which is true for only 20% of their peers. 50% of RS subjects receive a new criminal conviction after RS, which translates to 13-fold risk compared to their peers.

Conclusions The overall adult age prognosis of RS adolescents appears to be disheartening. The wide array of problems callsfor effective intervention and rehabilitation methods. By combining the results from the ARSS study, we present five key factors for good quality, evidence-based foster care for adolescents with severe conduct problems. Following these guidelines, it is possible to make the adult age prognosis better for adolescents suffering from severe behavioral problems residing both in RS and similar facilities. In addition, promising new intervention methods are introduced.

From paternalism to service-focused child protection system

Dr. Andrea Rácz (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)

The aim of the research, which is based on complex methodology is to examine how child protection professionals (child welfare services and centres, professionals in children's homes and foster parents) think about the primary and secondary target groups of the child protection, how can they describe their *family* and *professional* concept. The research findings also allow us to examine the way how children, young people and their parents themselves conceive child protection interventions aimed at children's well-being and protection, the functional mechanisms of the system, and how the entire system contributes to the strengthening of parental roles and to the well-being of children and young people. The social work education and the theoretical and methodological issues professionals are confronted with during work with families with children are given a special emphasis in the evaluation of the research results. When discussing the views of the actors of the child protection system, the prospects of development also was touched upon by outlining an integrative, service-focused child protection trend.

Keywords: child protection in Hungary, professional training, future development, service-focused child protection system

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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SELF ESTEEM AND PERCEIVED PERSONAL WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD FROM CARE

Ms. Federica Gullo (University of Oviedo), Ms. Laura García-Alba (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo)

Introduction

It has been widely recognized by research that young people in care are more vulnerable than the rest of their peers to experience a risky transition to independent life, including more probability of experiencing homelessness, unemployment, physical and mental health problems, weak support networks, etc. during this period, as they have to face a forced, shorter, faster and compressed transition process when they become of age. This results in lower perceived levels of general well-being and self-esteem for these young people. Although promoting these areas has shown its importance to facilitate positive experiences and outcomes in and aftercare, care leaving support services have often focused more on areas such as housing, career development or financial stability, leaving emotional and general well-being in a second level for the improvement of quality of life of these young people. This may be even more important for more vulnerable groups in care, such as girls, who have shown even lower levels of well-being and self-esteem.

Objective

In light of this, this work aimed to explore gender differences in the levels of perceived personal well-being and self-esteem in young people living in residential child care across their pathway to independent living, comparing those who are preparing to leave care to those who already left and considering their age differences.

Methods

Our sample consists of 380 young people in or leaving residential child care in different regions of Spain, aged 14 to 24 years old (M = 18.01, DT = 1.77). This is divided into two separated groups: those who were still in children's homes but preparing to leave care and live independently without returning to the family home; and those who had already left and were receiving some kind of aftercare support from their local authorities.

The participants were administered two standardized instruments: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) (Rosenberg, 1965), the most widely used instrument for the measurement of global self-esteem, understood as a person's overall evaluation of his or her worthiness as a human being, and the Personal Well-Being Index (PWI; Cummins et al., 2003), which assesses the subjective well-being as a component to understand the person's quality of life, considering their opinions and evaluations about different life domains and their satisfaction with these life aspects.

Results

T-Student and Chi-square analysis show that girls have lower levels of self-esteem and perceived wellbeing than boys, and girls tend to have lower scores in almost all areas of well-being. Moreover, young people who have already left the child care and are receiving some aftercare support for transition, have higher levels of self-esteem and higher scores in some areas of well-being compared to those who are still in care. Finally, a positive correlation was found between age, self-esteem and well-being.

Conclusions

This paper highlights the importance of paying special attention to well-being and self-esteem of more vulnerable groups in care, such as girls, who usually struggle more with internalizing disorders. Incorporating a gender perspective and taking into account their different characteristics, needs and problems, might be important not only for interventions from care but also for aftercare support services for care leavers. Moreover, results suggest that care leavers' levels of well-being and self-esteem can change as they get older and leave care, therefore it is important to delve more into the reasons for this, considering them in the development of more and better aftercare services to facilitate a successful transition

Going into and growing up in care: the perspectives of young people from residential care in Moldova

Dr. Irina Sirbu (University of East Anglia)

Objectives

The 2007-2012 national reform of child residential care in Moldova resulted in the closure of many residential institutions and reunifications of hundreds of children with their families. The remaining institutions continue to accept children from backgrounds affected by poverty, adversity, disability or parent migration. Yet, until today transitioning into and living in care as seen from the perspective of the child remain a significantly under-explored area, necessitating more research and evidence-based practices. This qualitative paper aims to shed light on the young people's (YP) perspectives of transitioning to and living in child residential institutions in Moldova. The focus is on YP's perceived agency and involvement in the decision-making around leaving their families, and further adjustment to life in care while at the same time maintaining links to their families and communities.

Methods

The retrospective accounts of 20 care experienced, young people (10 males, 10 females, aged 13-16 years old) were collected via semi-structured interviews and analysed using a Grounded Theory approach. Employing participatory research methods (life story maps, drawings, and photo-elicitation) helped shift the power imbalance and encouraged YP to share their perspectives with minimal impositions from the researcher. In order to explore YP's experiences of transition to and living in residential schools, they were invited to construct life stories and kinship maps and use them to talk about their journeys through the care system. Additionally, a mixture of drawings and photographs made for the study were used to understand YP's perspectives on life and relationships in residential institutions, families and home communities.

Results

Most YP came from deprived rural areas in Moldova, with one or both parents being migrant workers in the past. Many experienced distress and ambiguity at leaving their families at just 5-7 years old - they were not consulted and not properly explained the reasons for going to care or its implications. As a result, children had to create their own interpretations. Many questioned their family membership status and parents' commitment to them. Resumed child-parent contact, however, alleviated most of the children's anxieties.

YP described their pathways of adjustment to care: from 'being a stranger' to 'becoming a native', building family-like relations with children sharing similar experiences and the role of these relationships in their lives. Many praised good physical and educational environments of residential schools, with some referring to them as their 'second homes'. Yet, some spoke about physical and emotional abuse and bullying. In spite of YP's appreciation of comfortable conditions in institutions, their highly structured and regulated environments constrained opportunities for children's freedom or agency.

Many children stayed rooted in their families and home communities by visiting them and taking part in family and community lives. Extended families played a crucial role in maintaining continuity of family practices and relationships and helping children to stay connected to their home communities.

Conclusions

Study findings have several important implications for research, policy, and practice in Moldova and internationally. Children's views and voices need to be recognised and included in decision-making around their lives. Employing participatory methods in research involving children from vulnerable backgrounds is crucial as it helps shift power balance and amplify their voices. Children's various representations of life in residential institutions speak of a greater variety in the quality of such care. With such institutions still being used in poverty-stricken contexts, the focus should be on strengthening the good aspects of care (e.g. creating a home-like environment, facilitating family-like relationships), while at the same time using family and system resources to ensure consistency and continuity of family relationships and practices, where it is possible and in the best interests of the child.

Growing up in a context of parental substance use: Adult children's response to interventions

Ms. Florien Meulewaeter (Ghent University), Prof. Sarah De Pauw (Ghent university - department of special needs education), Prof. Wouter Vanderplasschen (Ghent University)

Background:A growing body of research shows that parental substance use may increase health-related and safety risks for children. Hence, a significant proportion of children growing up in a context of parental substance use got placed in out of-home care. However, out-of-home placement decisions are complex and have a high impact on children's lives. This child-centered contribution will focus on the principle of the child best interest, as experienced by adult children who grew up in a context of parental substance use.

Method:By conducting qualitative in-depth interviews, 44 adult children between 18 and 50 years old with and without former placement in out-of-home care in different types of settings (including foster care, boarding schools, group homes and other types of settings) retrospectively reflected on their upbringing in a context of parental substance use. Participants were recruited both through involvement of care providers as well as via snowball sampling. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis technique.

Results: Narratives reveal adult children's experiences of decision-making involvement, intervention measures and related support-needs during their young lives in or out of home – drawn from the different types of settings. Respondents disclose stories of feeling abandoned or not being heard by their parent(s) or authorities, with placement changes leading to discontinuity of care trajectories and decreased subjective wellbeing. However, results also reveal positive coping mechanisms and survival strategies during childhood, contributing to resiliency and reforming identities

Conclusion: Children and young people may benefit from both brief interventions during a period of crisis and longer term interventions. By reflecting on experiences related to support, decision-making and child protection interventions, findings from this study will focus on the principle of the best interest of the child in a context of parental substance use. Further research on child protection staff and judges' perspectives on decision-making in a context of parental substance use is needed.

Growing up in Child Care Homes in Nepal - From the children's own perspective

Mrs. Johanna Wilmes (Goethe-University, Frankfurt)

In Nepal, there are officially about 800 Child Care Homes (CCH) with more than 15,000 children. Stated in The Act Relating to Children 2075 (2018), placement in CCH shall be the last option for children in need of special protection. Reality often looks different. There is neither a regular and reliable enquiry, whether it is necessary to place children in residential care, nor is there proper monitoring on the condition of CCH. Besides the institutional framework, which makes children more vulnerable by the concentration of power, individual children carry their often precarious history of origin with them. In Nepal, as in many other countries of the Global South, poverty is the most common reason why families give their children in care of CCH. Access to education and a possible future in urban areas or even abroad are strong pull-factors, which play a big role in this decision-making. Obviously, the focus here lies particularly on potential protection factors and Capabilities. Just recently, the national discourse focuses on risk factors, since cases of physical and sexual abuse came to light and bad conditions of some CCH were reported. Authorities are obliged to immediately close these institutions. Nowadays, there are also a hand full of NGOs working intensively on information campaigns for parents in remote areas, family reunions and campaigns about the "orphan business" for potential foreign volunteers. But although the obsolete model of CCH as a "custodian" is no longer to be found in the Global North, new CCH are continuously opened in cooperation with partner organizations, and numerous CCH in countries of the Global South are supported in different ways.

Not ignoring the legal and social framework, but to bring the children's perspective on their own life in discussion, a study was conducted with about 350 children in 30 CCH. Children in Nepal have not been systematically asked about their situation growing up in institutional care so far. Methodologically, the study has an quantitative as well as an qualitative approach with a projective method. Findings reveal hazardous conditions in some of the CCH and bring out the dilemma of the children getting higher education on the one hand, but not being with their family in their community on the other hand. Quantitative as well as qualitative data show that the feeling of belonging is an important topic. The presented paper concentrates on the question what children revealed regarding their well-being and how an inclusion of the children's perspective may bring forward the discussion of the necessity of Child Care Homes.

Happily Ever After? What Works For Youth Who Are Leaving Out-Of-Home Care? A Systematic Review Of Reviews

Ms. Line Solheim Kvamme (Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Eastern and Southern Norway), Ms. Pamela Waaler (Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Eastern and Southern Norway), Prof. John Kjøbli (Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Eastern and Southern Norway), Dr. Siri Helland (Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Eastern and Southern Norway)

Background: Youth who have left residential placement (RP) are overrepresented in prevalence rates for mental disorders, delinquency, incarceration, low academic achievement, poor quality of life, and unemployment. Supportive interventions that aid youth during the reentry to their communities can be crucial for subsequent adaptation. Systematic reviews (SR) on this topic typically describe a specific intervention or program. Therefore, a summary of evidence about transitional interventions for youth who are leaving RP is needed.
Method: This review of systematic reviews was preregistered in PROSPERO. We employed a comprehensive electronic search strategy to PsycINFO, Ovid MEDLINE, Cochrane Library, Campbell Library, Web of Science, Sociological Abstracts, Criminal Justice Abstracts, Social Care Online, and Epistemonikos. SRs that fit the search criteria were evaluated using the AMSTAR checklist for methodological quality and the GRADE tool for assessing confidence in effect estimates.
Results: We screened 2,349 publications for eligibility. Eight SRs were included for analysis. The methodological quality of five SRs was critically low, two were of low quality, one was of moderate quality. Five SRs reported recidivism as the only outcome. Five SRs reported detrimental outcomes. Confidence in effect estimates was low or very low for all outcomes. Ninety-five per cent of study populations were from the United States.
Conclusion: We offer a rigorous appraisal of SRs on transitional interventions. The gaps of knowledge are vast regarding what works, how it works, and for whom. Development of a knowledge base should include defining the term ‘recidivism’, systematic reporting of demographics, and identifying effective common elements.

Hearing children’s voices on Support Family service

Dr. Tiina Lehto-Lundén (University of Helsinki)

Aim

The presentation is based on a PhD research that investigates children and their unique experiences of Support Family (Contact Family) service. The study gives voice to eleven (11) children. The aim of the study and the focus of the presentation is to make children’s experience based knowledge visible by answering the question: *What are the meanings that children give to support family service?*

The study enables the examination of the Support Family activity in a child and user oriented way as part of the child protection services.

Background

In Nordic countries a Support Family program is provided to promote both children and their parents well-being. The Support Family program provides flexible and regular social support for families. Support Family service is a goal-oriented child protection service. It means that a child receives an extra family and participates in the daily life of the Support Family and usually stays with the family one weekend a month. Support Families act on a voluntary basis. Support Family service is relatively unexplored in nationally and internationally in the research tradition, and particularly children’s own experiences are invisible.

Methods

The methodological guideline of the research is existential phenomenology, which is engaged in a holistic concept of a human. A holistic concept of a human takes into account the individual as an embodied and mental actor, influenced by the individual’s life situation and the surrounding timeframe. The research set-up is based on the view that children’s opinions deserve to be heard and taken into account when designing or targeting services for children. The children themselves have played an active role in gathering the research data. Children have shared their experiences through interviews, drawing, taking photographs and making videos.

Findings

This study summarizes children’s experiences of Support Family service into four general-level meanings: 1) *relationship-based*, 2) *contextual environment* 3) *activities* and 4) *repetitive transitions*.

Children’s experiences form a diverse picture of Support Family service. It is crystallized into a set of relationships, places, activities, material and travelling. Children’s experiences show that effective and interactive relationships with adults in Support Family are essential, but relationships with bonus-siblings and pets also play an important role.

Presentation highlights children’s knowledge based on their experiences and emphasizes the child as an active, experiential, informed and empowered individual, appreciating her experiences as part of the formation of scientific knowledge.

Hiraeth - Finding a Fictional Home – The impact of living in care on the construction of coherent narratives of identity and how this is represented in contemporary fiction

Ms. Rosie Canning (University of O)

- Introduction

In contemporary literature, orphans or characters with a care background are often portrayed or treated as criminals. For example, in *Island*,Rogers (1999) experiments with a damaged, criminalised care leaver who thinks a lot about murderering her mother. In *The Panopticon,*Jenni Fagan (2012) places looked-after teenagers in a building salvaged from its previous function as a jail. There is an abundance of care leavers in crime drama where they are stereotypically disturbed in character.
Is this how narratives of identity for care leavers are represented in contemporary fiction?

- Theoretical Framework

I propose to examine the impact of living in care on the construction of coherent narratives of identity and how this is represented in fiction. I want to examine this research through the lens of both creative and critical practice.
The creative piece, a novel, provisionally titled, *Hiraeth,* explores my own experience of leaving care and the positive influence that being highly literate has had on my life.

- Methodology

Using orphan literature from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I will use novels as instruction manuals. The field of study is creative writing; my focus will be on practice-led research and reflection thereby entering theoretical discourse with example and analysis.

- Background

There is very little contemporary critical research about care leavers in literature in the United Kingdom, Australia or the United States. Using contemporary care leaver texts will direct critical attention to the important, and largely neglected, children of the state.

- Conclusion

Understanding whether and how care-characters are portrayed in fiction may be indicative of how society views care leavers. The intention is to introduce a new voice to the critical and creative collective consciousness to broaden dialogue and create a new cultural identity for care leavers.

How do we combine psychometric screening of children in care with a child's perspective?

Ms. Charlotte Jacobsen (National Research Centre on Vulnerable Children and Youth, University College Copenhagen), Ms. Sofie Danneskiold-Samsøe (National Research Centre on Vulnerable Children and Youth, University College Copenhagen), Ms. Kresta Sørensen (National Research Centre on Vulnerable Children and Youth, University College Copenhagen), Ms. Nina Madsen Sjø (National Research Centre on Vulnerable Children and Youth, University College Copenhagen), Mr. Siddhartha Baviskar (National Research Centre on Vulnerable Children and Youth, University College Copenhagen), Mr. Martin Bergström (National Research Centre on Vulnerable Children and Youth, University College Copenhagen)

Objectives: In this presentation we investigate potentials and pitfalls that we meet when we combine psychometric screening and attempts to strengthen child participation in social care for foster children.

In a large intervention research project, we test the feasibility of two validated psychometric questionnaires with the aim of improving the assessment and tracking of children's mental well-being and learning difficulties. The questionnaires are filled out by foster parents and teachers of children in family foster care as part of a routine follow-up of the child's well-being conducted by social workers every 6 months. Children 11 or above are invited to fill out the questionnaires as well.

To us as researchers – and to our fellow social workers practicing with us in the research project - bringing in the child's perspective is an ethical imperative. This means that we are engaged in finding ways to combine screening with good inclusion of the child perspective.

Methods: We invited children aged 10 to 13 to participate in child panels. In each child panel children meet three Saturday afternoons to discuss and give their opinions on a subject. One important subject is the children's views on their routine encounters with social workers and social workers' questioning practices with or without the use of questionnaires. In total 18 children will participate in three separate panels from fall 2020 to fall 2021. In addition, we interview 8 children who have participated in the assessment. We present the advice from the children directly to the social workers involved in the project with the aim of adjusting the guide and assessment tools used in the project.

Conclusion: Children in our child panels questioned the legitimacy of the questioning practices of social workers in general. These practices form the context and framework for any psychometric screening as well and hence – finding the best way to combine screening with participatory approaches to the child interview implies that we rethink the two in combination.

Discussion: Based on the above, we discuss the following questions:

- What are the implications of using screening questionnaires to children's experience of their encounters with social workers?
- If we organise our meeting with the child and routine follow-up with psychometric questionnaires as 'fixed points', how then do we make space for children's right to set the agenda most important to them?
- How can we ensure the children's perspective and at the same time take their resistant towards being questioning by their social worker into consideration?

How to Promote the Child Welfare Approach? A Qualitative Concept Analysis in Iran

Dr. Marzieh Takaffoli (Department of Social Work, University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Tehran, Iran), Prof. Maliheh Arshi (Department of Social Work, University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Tehran, Iran), Prof. Meroe Vameghi (Social Welfare Management Research Center, University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Tehran, Iran), Prof. Mir Taher Mousavi (Social Welfare Management Research Center, University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Tehran, Iran), Prof. Mohsen Shati (Mental Health Research Center, Tehran Institute of Psychiatry, School of Behavioral Sciences and Mental Health, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran)

Objectives: Protecting children and developing their well-being have become a great concern for civil society and policy makers in Iran, and in recent decades, considerable improvements have been gained in legislation and measures related to child welfare and protection. Although different governmental and non-governmental organizations provide various services to different groups of in-need or at-risk children, they often follow un-integrated and even incongruous approaches. To address this gap, this study aimed to develop a promoted approach to child welfare to integrate the practices of different organizations as well as related policies. Therefore, experts and practitioners in this field could be a valuable resource for defining this approach.

Method: The conventional qualitative content analysis was applied to in-depth interviews conducted with child welfare experts in Iran. Purposeful and theoretical sampling was used until data saturation was gained by 56 qualitative interviews. The interviews were analyzed simultaneously using MAXQDA 2018 software.

Results: Findings of the study present an approach to reform and promote the child welfare in Iran, including four main categories: 1) custodianship of government to child welfare issues (two sub-categories of accepting the responsibility and custodian of children by the government along with the family and governmentalization versus privatization of child welfare services), 2)the holistic, universal, and systemic approach to the child welfare system (six subcategories of system theory approach, the congruent approach of different parts of government to children and child welfare issues, the holistic approach to the causes of problems and issues, the holistic approach to various needs of the child and family, social and supportive approach, and the universal, preventive, and developmental approach), 3) child-centred approach to the child welfare system (six sub-categories of giving attention and priority to the interests and needs of the child, giving attention to the child independently from the family and different from the adults, considering the principle of individuality in providing services to the child, creating a child-friendly environment and structure, promoting and ensuring child participation, and empowering children), and 4) family-centred approach to the child welfare system (three subcategories of priority of family care, systemic approach to the whole family versus individuals, and family empowerment approach).

Conclusion: According to the experts' opinion, in the first place, due to a great emphasis on family maintenance and privacy in Iran, it is necessary to accept the government's custodial and responsible role for children that allow authorities to intervene in families regarding children's best interests. This could lead to defining a congruent and integrated approach and collaborative practice by the government to address the conflicts specifically among the judicial and welfare system. The experts emphasized that the gaps of child-centred dimensions are significantly more evident in child welfare regulations and policies and on the other side, the family has an important status and value in Iran. Therefore, the child-centred approach should be addressed more profoundly and both family-centred and child-centred approaches should be developed concurrently and intently.

***Keywords:**child welfare, child protection, child-centred, family-centred, holistic approach,Iran, conventional qualitative content analysis*

How to tackle the risk of suicide? The views of former children in care on the care system's role in suicide prevention

Mrs. Petra Göbbels-Koch (Department of Social Work, Royal Holloway, University of London,)

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people worldwide. Studies that investigated suicidal ideation and behaviour or death by suicide among care-experienced young people indicated a higher vulnerability compared to peers who lived with their birth family. However, an in-depth understanding of factors that influence suicidal ideation is still needed to enable practitioners to empower children in care and those young people in the transition from care to adulthood to cope with or even to prevent suicidal thoughts and behaviour. Therefore, the perspectives of care-experienced young adults who experienced suicidal thoughts and found a way to cope with them are invaluable to reach this much-needed knowledge and further inform suicide prevention guidelines.

Based on the findings of a cross-national research project using a mixed-method approach (ongoing data collection: 7/2020-6/2021), the poster presentation covers the views of care-experienced young adults on how the care system can address the risk of suicidal experiences among care-experienced young people. The sample includes care-experienced young adults from England and Germany who had been in foster and/or residential care during their adolescence. Besides statistical analysis to demonstrate the characteristics of the sample, framework analysis has been used to analyse the qualitative data from the online survey and semi-structured interviews. Apart from the participant's views on perceived influencing factors of personally experienced suicidal ideation, the study has collected their voices on how practitioners can or should empower young people in and leaving care to help them cope with suicidal experiences or even to prevent suicidal thoughts. Preliminary findings show that bullying is most often mentioned as a perceived cause of suicidal ideation while psychotherapeutic support and relationships are the most stated resources that helped to cope. The participants' recommendations on suicide prevention in the care system cover themes concerning child-centred approaches to address suicidal experiences and psychological needs, conditions and support for the transition from care into adulthood, and access to mental health services and other relevant resources. Following the presentation of frequencies of themes, selected quotations from the interviews will provide contextual meaning to the generated themes.

The findings of this study offer novel in-depth insights provided by the perspectives of former children in care to address this important mental health concern. They contribute to a better understanding of the risk of suicide among care-experienced young people and to inform urgently needed suicide prevention guidelines tailored to children in care and care leavers. Scientific knowledge informed by the voices of care-experienced young adults to reduce the risk for suicidal ideation and behaviour could, therefore, open up new opportunities in the practical work with care-experienced young people.

Identifying Factors of Wellbeing in Russian Orphans

Dr. Alexandra Telitsyna (National Research University Higher School of Education), Prof. Veronica Oslon (Moscow State University of Psychology & Education), Prof. Galina Semya (Moscow State University of Psychology & Education), Dr. Elvira Garifulina (Timchenko foundation)

Introduction:
Starting from 2012 Russia conducts deinstitutionalization policy and now the main indicator of success is the number of children living in institutions. Active family placement process has resulted in residents of the institution now mainly consists of adolescents with behavioral and emotional problems, children with disabilities and groups of siblings.

Purpose of science research: The purpose of science research is to identify factors for child's wellbeing while temporary stay in an orphanage and the subjective assessment of children's level of well-being (psychological well-being)

Methods: The data used for this project was collected by the questionnaire of 72 indicators, a tool for monitoring the behavior of children and caregivers, an additional questionnaire for children; well-being assessment questionnaire containing 10 scales for three age groups from preschool to older adolescents. In 2016-2018, the research was conducted in 1873 institution in 85 regions of Russia. In each region a team of academics, specialists from Non-profits, independent experts was created. Training was conducted for team members through a series of webinars prior to undertaking the assessment.

The results: To ensure the well-being of the children, the following conditions are necessary:
1- Life of children in institution is organised according to the principles of family care (including the creation of conditions for attachment to be formed); 2- Contribution to find family-based placement for children (including reintegration into the primary family); 3- Work with parents of children, who are placed in an organization at the request of parents; 4- Children attend schools according to their needs; 5- Training of staff and volunteers; 6- Special environment and services for children with special needs and children with disabilities; 7- Cooperation with NGOs; 8 - Openness and accessibility of the organization.

Conclusion: A study of the psychological well-being of children showed that the most emotionally stressful for children were questions about the presence and frequency of contact with relatives, and the level of well-being is higher in the presence of a trusted adult and respect for rights. The greatest contribution to the trouble is made by the time the child is in the orphanage, the lack of contact with parents and relatives, the uncertainty of the future.

Immigrant youth delinquency: Youth's and parents' perceptions of immigration experience and its connection to criminal behavior

Dr. Liat Yakhnich (Beit Berl College), Prof. Sophie Walsh (Bar-Ilan University)

The children of immigrant parents account for approximately 10% of all children in Israel; 53% of these are from the former Soviet Union (FSU). Studies of this population reveal high levels of risk-taking and anti-social behavior that is manifested in high dropout rates from school, delinquency, substance abuse, etc. (Cosher, Ben-Arie, & Cohen, 2011; Horowitz & Brosh, 2011; Mirsky, 2012).

Immigration can pose enormous challenges to an adolescent's psychological and social functioning. Differences in language, values, norms, and rules of social interaction can hamper his or her development. In addition, immigration can undermine an adolescent's process of identity formation (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006). One of the adverse consequences observed in this context is the high incidence of anti-social behavior among immigrant youth. The criminological view explains this phenomenon by variables such as conflicting values, exposure to discrimination, social marginalization, and lack of social control as significant factors (Killian, 2002). The psychological approach attributes it to the sense of loss and grief experienced by the immigrant youth (Henry, Stiles, & Biran, 2005) and developmental challenges and the immaturity of adolescence (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006).

This paper presents a qualitative study that explores the development of delinquent behavior among immigrant adolescents as perceived by the adolescents and their parents. Twenty participants were interviewed for this study: ten male immigrant young people and ten parents. All immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union. The interviews were conducted in Hebrew and Russian. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated (as needed).

The participants reported multiple perceived reasons for the development of delinquency, which could be organized into 4 main categories: situational factors, social factors, familial factors, and personality factors. The situational factors included participants' attributions related to objective circumstances such as age, immigration, financial hardships, and social norms related to child-rearing. The social factor largely relates to peer pressure and the young persons' wish to be socially accepted. The familial factors include parental unavailability to their children due to long working hours and negative relationships with the parents. Personality factors refer to sensation-seeking and risk-taking, desire for power, escaping from emotions, and personality characteristics (weak character, low self-esteem, introversion, stubbornness, and inability to delay gratification).

Apparently, most of the participants don't attribute the development of delinquent behavior directly to immigration, but rather to other situational, social, familial, and personality factors. However, close observation allows seeing that these factors are not entirely independent of immigration and adaptation issues, and, as we believe, constitute mediating variables that connect between immigration and youth delinquency.

Immigrant Youth's and Parents' experience of Child-Protection Services: the importance of the relationship

Dr. Chantal Lavergne (Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté, CIUSSS Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de Montréal), Dr. Rosita Vargas Diaz (Université de Montréal), Prof. Sarah Dufour (Université de Montréal)

Immigrant families account for a significant part of those receiving child protection services in major urban centers like Montreal, Quebec (Canada). Some groups are over-represented in this CPS system. The strong presence of these children in protection services raises questions. While the importance of taking the intercultural dimension into account in social work is officially acknowledged by the Quebec government, little is known at present about the experiences of immigrant families in vulnerable situations.

The presentation will focus on the results of a qualitative research that explores the immigrant families' experiences with child protection services, as well as their reactions towards social workers' approaches in their cases. The study was conducted with fourteen mothers, seven fathers and twenty youths aged 12 years and over, receiving youth protection services in the greater Montreal area. The interviews were held in the language of their preference. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The results revealed a wide range of opinions about how culture is taken into account in intervention in the CPS system.

Participants' experiences vary throughout the process and have a straight relation with social workers' attitudes towards their migration trajectories, their culture and their challenges and strengths in their integration and acculturation processes; as well as of the efforts that they make to respond to their singular needs. We could distinguish two different poles in intervention, each one with an attitudinal and action repertory. In the first pole, culture is used as a tool for intervention, in the second, we observed a lack of consideration for the culture and migration trajectories.

When culture is used as a tool, the intervention is based on respect, curiosity, and empathy and leaves room for negotiation and family participation in the intervention decision-making process. The intervention leads to more openness, transparency, and involvement of parents in the intervention. On the other hand, when there is a lack of consideration for culture, the intervention is more rigid and less open to negotiation. Families experience a feeling of indifference and contempt on the part of the social worker. This type of intervention leads them either to rebel or to compliance reactions that do not contribute to a transparent and positive relationship. For participants to be able to appreciate the services and for the intervention to be positive and meaningful for them, they must be involved in the intervention decision-making process.

These findings evidence variability experienced by immigrant families who receive child protection services. It shows the importance of social workers' attitudes towards otherness and the importance of adapting services to the singularity of immigrant families' needs and strengths, as well as to see beyond the child protection warrant and look at the special families' needs related to the integration and acculturation processes.

Impact of youth, family, and program perception of safety on outcomes in the context of trauma

Dr. Jonathan Huefner (Boytstown Translational Research Center)

In the United States, there is a continuing federal mandate for child welfare systems to focus on safety, permanency, and well-being. Some have argued that among these ambitious goals, ensuring children's safety is the most important and necessary for creating a therapeutic milieu. It has been shown that trauma impacts a youth's perception of and response to perceived threat. This study examines the relationship between youth perception of safety, history of trauma, level of aggression, and outcomes in a residential care setting, and compares it parent and caregiver perceptions. Data came from the organization's administrative database and from the care provider certification measures collected during the period of January 2016 through December 2018. Trauma exposure and symptoms, the perceived safety and aggression were used in a mediational path model analysis in predicting goal attainment, program completion, and post-discharge placement. More trauma exposure was related to higher levels of aggression in the group home and the supervisor perceiving the environment as not as safe. Additionally, there was a significant indirect effect where level of aggression in the treatment home mediated the relationship between trauma exposure and all three outcome measures. Specifically, higher trauma exposure was related to departing youth having a lower rate of program completion when mediated by higher levels of aggression in the treatment home. Of note, after controlling for the mediating effect of aggression in the milieu, trauma exposure was directly associated with better outcomes for all three outcomes measures. In other words, when aggression in the treatment home is low, youth with higher levels of trauma history tend to have better outcomes than other youth in the program. These results highlight the importance of mitigating youth's exposure to aggression within a residential placement (e.g., by being proactive in preventing incidents of aggression and, when possible, having youth leave the area if a fellow resident becomes aggressive) – particularly if a youth has a history of trauma. These results also highlight the importance of gathering information about safety from multiple informants (e.g., the youth, program supervisor, and youth's parents) in a residential milieu, since each perspective was associated with the youth's outcomes in a unique way. Youth with a history of trauma will likely benefit the most from the programs receiving the highest rating of safety from a supervisor. In addition, youth's perception of safety of their residential placement can have also have implications for their treatment progress and, as our investigation suggests, may be associated with unintended outcomes in some cases. Thus, understanding youth's perception of safety of residential milieu and how it relates to their progress should be a vital component in treatment planning.

Implementation and evaluation of a trauma-informed practice model within a residential out-of-home care setting: The Sanctuary Model

Ms. Emma Galvin (Monash University)

Research shows that new knowledge and evidence cannot be easily translated in a simple, linear way into practice, and the implementation of programs aimed at improving client outcomes, particularly in child welfare services, can be a complex process. In particular, residential OoHC is often fraught with unanticipated events and crises, which can result in poor translation into practice.

The aim of this project is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Sanctuary Model in improving cultural, physical and emotional health and wellbeing outcomes for the children living in residential OoHC, by supporting the staff working with them. Whilst the Sanctuary Model is evidence-informed, there has been a paucity of research conducted to understand how and why components of trauma-informed care models, such as the Sanctuary Model, may lead to positive outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in residential care.

An implementation science approach guided by the Monash Centre for Health Research and Implementation (MCHRI) Knowledge-to-Action framework, has been used to generate the knowledge needed to understand how the Sanctuary Model can be applied across a complex residential care service and lead to improved outcomes for young people living in out-of-home care. The MCHRI framework aims to develop co-designed and stakeholder driven, iterative approaches in translating new knowledge and evidence into practice and focuses on methodological rigour and stakeholder engagement and partnership is embedded in every stage of the process.

Phase one of this research involved formative research in which the attitudes of residential care workers towards trauma-informed care were assessed. Key stakeholders also had the opportunity to share their understanding and experiences of The Sanctuary Model. In phase two, a systematic review was performed which examined the effectiveness of interventions and practice models for improving health and psychosocial outcomes of young people in residential care, and a review of existing guidelines and policies, on structures, processes and supporting infrastructure was conducted, to guide the development of an organisational map. The organisational map outlined the governance, operational structure, programs and interventions embedded to support the implementation of The Sanctuary Model in residential OoHC. To understand the priorities and needs of implementing The Sanctuary Model, stakeholders have been engaged throughout the research to be able to lead the translation of evidence into practice and to inform phases three (efficacy research) and four (implementation research), which are currently underway. Phase 3 and 4 of this research involve adapting the Sanctuary Model guidelines, practices and resources (data obtained from Phase 2) and co-designing an ‘implementation blueprint’ and resource toolkit. Adaptations to the model do not interrupt the overall philosophy driving the model but that will ensure the model is more relevant, meaningful and applicable in the Australian OoHC context.

Results show that staff working in residential care have high positive attitudes, empathy for, and understanding of, the importance of trauma-informed care. Key findings highlight that organisations need to do more than embrace a trauma-informed approach and need commit to organisational and behavioural change by providing resources, hands on support, and ongoing practice-based and refresher training by connecting trauma-theory to practice, whilst providing a safe environment when implementing the Sanctuary Model.

Currently, four homes are piloting adaptations around connecting trauma-theory to practice with young people, specifically around psychoeducation, with a focus on supporting staff and ensuring that the Sanctuary Model reaches and supports all young people in care.

Improving education in child and youth care programs: The perspectives of educators, children in care and graduates- The relationship between low academic tracking , self-beliefs and involvement in risk behaviors: The case of an ethnic minority in Israel.

Dr. Sausan Abu-Rukun Hadeed (The Ono Academic College, Haifa.)

Academic tracking (or streaming) at high school according to previous achievements in secondary school is common in Israel as in other countries, and it aims to give an answer to different academic levels of students. However, different tracks constitute different social context: students from different tracks receive different school leaving certificates (Diploma/BAGRUT), which determine students' future ambitions and future opportunities. Consequently, the tracking process has psychological and educational effects on students' perceived competence and their future picture.

Previous research on the influence of tracking on students' academic self-concept (Liu, Wong, & Parkins, 2005; Marsh & Hau, 2003) has shown that being surrounded by low achieving peers, as occurs in low tracks make a student feel negative about him or herself as a result of assimilating social comparisons.

One objective of the current research was analyzing to what extent high school tracking relates to student's self-beliefs (i.e., their academic self-concept and their future orientation), contributes to the students' academic achievement and to his/her involvement in risk behaviors. This study was carried among Druze adolescents, an ethnic minority in Israel.

Due to the tracking process which is implemented in high school setting, the hypothesis was, that all examined factors would be more positive among students in both, scientific and excellence tracks, while students learning in low academic (technical) tracks would be more involved in risk behaviors.

The sample included 317 Druze adolescents (Mage= 17.65 years old, SD= 0.54; 65% girls, 35% boys) studying in six formal high schools in Israel divided to three academic tracks: technical classes, scientific classes and excellence classes (where students study both, scientific and technical domains). Participants completed a survey at their classes. Factor analysis was conducted to compare all studied factors in three different tracks mentioned above. Based on the analysis, findings indicate that Druze teenagers studying in scientific or excellence tracks compared to technical tracks are more likely to have higher positive values of academic self-concept and future orientation, Furthermore, their academic achievement are greater and they tend to be less involved in risk behaviors such as smoking, alcohol drinking, substance abuse and bullying or other violent behaviors.

These findings not only support the main hypothesis, Moreover, they are found to be in line with other findings revealed from studies which have compared students' perceptions regarding their academic track and similarly pointed negative effects of belonging to a lower school track (Van Houtte, Demanet, & Stevens, 2012; Dumont, Protsch, Jansen, & Becker, 2017). One limitation discussed in the current study is that the association observed between students' track and their self-beliefs may represent a "Vicious circle", for instance, anticipating a low school leaving certificate may result in lower self-beliefs which then in turn makes it even more likely that a student will receive this certificate.

Conducting longitudinal studies that integrate quantitative and qualitative methods are recommended in order to elucidate further the nature and the interrelations in the complex of academic tracks and psychological, educational and functional outcomes.

Improving education in child and youth care programs: The perspectives of educators, children in care and graduates-Improving academic accomplishments in child and youth care programs: The perspective of both educators and children in care

Prof. Emmanuel Grupper (Ono Academic College), Prof. Shlomo Romi (School of Education at Bar-Ilan University)

In the past, while caring for vulnerable youth populations placed in out-of-home care, the first priority was stabilizing and caring for emotional problems. Academic accomplishment was generally considered a minor priority, More and more attention is given lately to strengthening the capacity of youth to cope successfully in the educational system. This lack of attention undermined these adolescents'opportunity for higher education (Casas & Montserrat, 2010; Jackson & Cameron, 2010). Benbenishty, Zeira and Arzav (2015), who studied this issue in Israel claim that overcoming the challenge for care leavers to successfully enter and complete higher education could be crucial to breaking the viscous circle of marginality. The change of policy in residential education and youth villages' system is at the core of this presentation. Ministry of Education who is in charge and supervising these educational programs is putting additional budget and is expecting students to improve their academic achievements. Data collected among educators working in five residential education facilities and interviews with children in care should enable us to reflect whether and how this policy change is felt and conceived by both educators and young people who are living in these residential educational programs.

Improving Education Success of Youth at risk in Child and Youth Care programs: The perspectives of researchers, policy makers, educators and care leavers

Prof. Emmanuel Grupper (Ono Academic College), Prof. Shlomo Romi (School of Education at Bar-Ilan University and Hertzog College)

Studies have demonstrated that children and adolescents placed in child and youth care facilities have weaker academic achievements than similar populations educated at normative settings (Cashmore & Paxman, 2006; Courtney, Dworsky, Lee & Rapp, 2010; Stein, 2006). The reason for that are perhaps related to the largely accepted notion in caring for vulnerable populations the first priority should be given to stabilizing and relating to emotional problems identified. Academic accomplishment was generally considered a minor priority. This true for out of home care and also for community-based programs aiming to achieve resilience among youth at risk. School drop out is at the core of many difficulties young people are experiencing. The discrepancy in academic achievements between residential care graduates and their peers who studied at home is at the core of the criticism of child and youth care programs in many countries. Criticism intensified when It was shown that in many alternative programs low-level vocational learning tracks were offered to these young people (Lifshitz & Katz, 2015; Grupper & Zagury, 2019). Therefore, more attention is given lately to strengthening vulnerable youth to cope successfully in the educational system. The symposium will deal with this issue from four perspectives: Research and educational philosophy; Decision and policy makers, educators and care leavers, graduates of such programs that can reflect on their experience in care. Shlomo Romi (Bar Ilan University and Hertzog College, Israel) and Emmanuel Grupper (Ono Academic College, Israel), will moderate this session. In their opening they would present a conceptualization about the challenge to incorporate non-formal education elements in normative schools to achieve successful inclusion of youth at risk and avoid their drop out. The decision makers perspectives would be presented by Emmanuel Grupper will present an example of policy change in Israeli residential youth villages realized using an ecological perspective, having as its objective to achieve better success in schooling challenges for youth at risk integrated in these settings. The care leavers' perspective will be presented by Clara Bombach and Anna Schmid (both members of FICE Switzerland). They will share data collected as part of the project "creating futures" where young experts (aged 14-24) , staff and leaders from five youth homes in Switzerland and Hungary were interviewed. The Educator's perspective would be presented by Sausan Abu-Rukun Hadeed, through the research findings in Ort Ronson, Isfiya high school for children from an ethnic minority group (Druze) in Israel. The author, who is a teacher in this high school, would present the findings of her research about the impact of self-beliefs and involvement in risk behavior on low academic tracking.

Participants:

Prof. Shlomo Romi, Bar Ilan University, and Hertzog College (Israel) and Prof. Emmanuel Grupper, Ono Academic College (Israel)

Improving academic accomplishments in child and youth care residential programs: The perspective of both researchers, decision makers and educators in residential care

MA Clara Bombach, Marie Merierhofer children's institute, FICE Switzerland and Dr. Anna Katharina Schmid, ZHAW University of Applied Sciences, Zurich, Switzerland

Which future for children from care? Dreams and fears regarding the future of former children in care in Switzerland

Dr. Sausan Abu-Rukun Hadeed, Ort Ronson, Isfiya high school (Israel)

The relationship between low academic tracking in normative high school, self-beliefs and involvement in risk behaviors among adolescents in Israel: The case of ethnic minority

Improving educational outcomes for children in care through attachment and trauma awareness training in schools

Dr. Neil Harrison (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Mr. Andrew Brown (University of Oxford), Dr. Priya Tah (University of Oxford), Ms. Helen Trivedi (Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

Traumatic experiences in childhood can have a profound and long-lasting impact on a child's ability to engage successfully in school. In the UK, it is estimated that as many as one-third of children undergo such experiences – this proportion is considerably higher among children in care (Department for Education, 2019). Trauma has both neurobiological and psychosocial components that exert a strong influence on the ability of the child to build trusted relationships with adults, participate in group activities and regulate their emotions in stressful situations – all key elements in successful engagement with school (Anda *et al.*, 2006; Teicher *et al.*, 2016).

This has strong resonances with attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) which asserts that children's foundational relationships with key adults are instrumental in feelings of security, identity construction and responses to novel situations. Attachment theory has long been employed in care settings, but its use in schools is more novel – an extensive review (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2015) concluded it had considerable potential for supporting children in care.

Educational policies and practices informed by trauma and attachment theory typically emphasise a relational approach based in empathy, consistency and trust. Behaviour is understood through the lens of prior experiences and emotional responses are validated – even if the resulting actions are not. Children are helped to emotionally self-regulate, including the agency to remove themselves from stressful situations. It is hypothesised that this approach creates calmer and more supportive school environments benefitting all pupils, but particularly the most vulnerable (Parker and Levinson, 2018).

This paper draws on emerging data from a five-year mixed methods study (2017-2022) working with 300 English schools. The study focuses on how schools change following training in attachment and trauma awareness, including shifts in ethos, policy and everyday practices among teachers and other staff. It also examines the impact on children's wellbeing, attendance, progress, attainment and exclusion.

Quantitative data is collected from staff and pupils through online surveys completed before the training and again after 12 and 24 months; baseline data was collected from over 4,500 staff and 11,500 pupils – the second phase of collection will end in early 2020. This is supplemented by qualitative case study visits to thirty schools, comprising semi-structured interviews with senior leaders, classroom teachers and teaching assistants, plus a focus group with children.

The paper will juxtapose an analysis of the children's changing perceptions of their own wellbeing and the school environment with data from school staff about how their micro-practices have altered in response to the training. It will also explore the accounts from senior and frontline staff about their perceptions of the impact of these changes on children in and around the care system, based on a deductive analysis of the interview data.

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Improving looked-after children's well-being through reducing compassion fatigue in foster parents. The development of the 3 R's programme: Re-boot, Rejuvenate and Re-Connect

Dr. Heather Ottaway (University of Bristol)

Background: Children in care in the UK usually have early adverse life experiences of abuse and neglect. These experiences, alongside being removed from their birth families, can lead to difficulties associated with trauma and loss. Children in state care therefore require a different, therapeutic form of parenting which promotes their developmental recovery. Foster care is the most frequent type of out-of-home placement in the UK. It is a demanding and stressful role which carries additional burdens because foster parents care for children in their own homes, thereby having no separation between their work and home lives, unlike those in other helping professions.

Foster parents aim to promote children's developmental recovery by providing emotionally attuned parenting. This requires them to engage empathically with the child's experiences of trauma on a regular basis. Carers' capacity to be emotionally involved in the caring task, and their ability to remain child-centred, have been identified as protective factors in relation to children's well-being.

However, compassion fatigue (CF) occurs in many foster parents due to a combination of the demands of being a therapeutic parent alongside a lack of understanding and appropriate support from professionals. CF is characterised by a developing lack of empathy and compassion as a result of experiencing physical and emotional exhaustion (or 'burnout'), and/ or symptoms of secondary trauma. This affects foster parents' ability to work sensitively and effectively with children who are traumatised. Role satisfaction is thought to ameliorate symptoms of CF, and appropriate, non-judgemental professional support significantly contributes to this.

It is hypothesised that the intervention will reduce symptoms of compassion fatigue and improve foster parent reflective functioning and self-efficacy, allowing them to re-engage with, respond to, and meet children's emotional needs. This will lead to longer-term improvements in children's well-being and family stability.

Methods: This study was funded by the Medical Research Council's Public Health Intervention Development fund, and developed in partnership with the National Association of Therapeutic Parents in England. A mixed-methods approach to intervention development and assessment of its feasibility for a pilot RCT was undertaken. The study had three elements a)a review of relevant literature; b) a qualitative feasibility study to gain feedback on the proposed intervention and initial theory of change through focus groups with foster carers (n=33) and social workers (n=19), and interviews with service managers (n=8); c) Initial economic analysis of the intervention. A final logic model and theory of change has been developed to inform the preparation of the intervention for rigorous pilot evaluation.

The 3 R's programme: Designed for foster carers with moderate to high levels of burnout and secondary trauma, and low role satisfaction, as assessed by the Professional Quality of Life measure (PROQol). It comprises the following strands:

Foster parents:

- Psycho education workshop for foster carers focusing on raising awareness of the signs, symptoms and management of CF.

- One individual session of trauma interruption therapy (Havening)
- Weekly individual empathic listening sessions for 3 months

- Monthly peer support meetings for 3 months

Supporting social work professionals (fostering social workers, children's social workers and managers):

- Psycho-education workshop focusing on raising awareness of the signs, symptoms and management of CF.

- Monthly reflective group coaching sessions over three months.

Results: There was broad agreement that The 3 R's programme is acceptable to foster carers, social workers and managers, and that there is considerable demand for it. The importance of de-stigmatising and normalising CF was emphasised as a means to enabling more appropriate support for foster carers. Issues of high social worker turnover and the challenges of managing high caseloads were emphasised as difficulties for social workers in taking part in the intervention.

Improving mental health screening for children in care

Prof. Michael Tarren-Sweeney (University of Canterbury), Ms. Anna Sophie Hahne (The Tavistock Institute), Mr. Matt Gieve (The Tavistock Institute)

Although children residing in statutory out-of-home care and those adopted from care are more likely than not to have mental health difficulties requiring clinical intervention or support, their difficulties often remain undetected. Children's agencies have a duty of care to identify those child clients who require therapeutic and other support services, without regard to the availability of such services. The present article proposes a first-stage mental health screening procedure (calibrated for high sensitivity) for children and adolescents (ages 4–17) in alternative care, which children's agencies can implement without clinical oversight using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Brief Assessment Checklists (BAC). The screening procedure was derived from analyses of BAC, SDQ, and "proxy SDQ" scores obtained in three national studies of children and adolescents residing in alternative care (Australia, the Netherlands, and England). The SDQ and BAC demonstrated moderate to high screening accuracy across a range of clinical case criteria—the SDQ being slightly better at predicting general mental health problems and the BAC slightly better at predicting attachment- and trauma-related problems. Accurate first-stage screening is achieved using either the SDQ or the BAC alone, with recommended cut points of 10 (i.e., positive screen is 10 or higher) for the SDQ and 7 for the BAC. Greater accuracy is gained from using the SDQ and BAC in parallel, with positive screens defined by an SDQ score of 11 or higher or a BAC score of 8 or higher. Agencies and post-adoption support services should refer positive screens for comprehensive mental health assessment by clinical services.

Improving visibility of children aged 0-3 in social services: a pilot study for participative assessment

Mrs. Daniela Moreno (University of Padua), Dr. Serbati Sara (University of Padua), Dr. Paola Milani (University of Padua), Dr. Marco Ius (University of Padua)

Background. In 2018, the Italian Ministry of Labor and Social Policies started a collaboration with the University of Padua. The agreement consists of scientific actions of professional training and research aiming at supporting the implementation of a national anti-poverty measure (Citizenship Income, C.I.) and it is funded by the National Operative Program for inclusion of EU 2014-2020. Given the increasing attention to 0-3 y.o. children as an investment priority in order to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty (REC 2013/112/UE), the research aims at evaluating the C.I. program effects over parental skills and, therefore, on child development. The study involves families with children between 0 to 3 years old. Particularly, those beneficiary families that show multidimensional vulnerabilities and require an in-depth analysis in order to define the care plan to activate along with the cash transfer. This presentation concerns the results of a pilot study that has been part of the above-mentioned research action.

Objective. The aim of the study is to describe the process of introducing specific assessment tools within a participative framework and its effects on professional practices with vulnerable families and children aged 0-3.

Paradigm. From a pragmatic paradigm, which understands knowledge as an active process of intervention on reality (Dewey, 1938; Peirce, 1992), Participative and Transformative Evaluation (P.T.E., Serbati & Milani, 2012; Serbati, 2017, 2020) acts both as a conceptual framework and as a methodological approach for this study. P.T.E. uses measures and data in a double function: (1) of accountability of the program, in order to collect information about the quality and outcomes of interventions; (2) of negotiation during interventions (Guba & Lincoln 1989) between all the people who are important to the child's development (the team around the child), in order to assess the needs and define the goals of a care plan. P.T.E. is also the methodological approach promoted, at national level, within the C.I. program, for the assessment of family situations.

Methods. Using a training-action-research strategy, researchers combined formative instances with practitioners' actions, qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, in order to: 1) train social work practitioners in using P.I.C.C.O.L.O. (Roggman et al., 2013) within the Multidimensional Model of the Child's World (the Italian adaptation of the Framework for the Assessment for Children in Need and their families, FACNF); 2) organize reflexive practice laboratories (Mortari, 2011; Milani, 2018) where analysing and reflecting about the practices of intervention and support with targeted families. Thereby, the data was collected directly by practitioners with families at T0 (baseline) and T1 (first outcome evaluation), using P.I.C.C.O.L.O. to assess parenting interactions. Semi-structured one-hour telephonic interviews were conducted for an in-depth exploration of 19 practitioners' views about experimenting with these instruments, regarding their work with altogether 17 families.

Results. Although the C.I. policy has already introduced a priority for early childhood attention, without the intentional use of specific assessment tools, younger children are likely to remain invisible for the practitioners of social services on first contact with families at C.I encounters. Main results indicate that using specific assessment tools within the P.T.E. approach enabled practitioners to better observe the parent-child relationship and understand the child's world and their developmental needs and, most importantly, to create a new space for dialogue and reflexivity about parenting and developmental needs of 0-3 children, which is revealed as a scarcely addressed area in the context of interventions to fighting poverty. Taking advantage of this new space

for dialogue to favour the participation of families requires reinforcing communication skills and a revision of the dominant paradigms regarding change processes. Pedagogical, methodological and communicative challenges that emerge from the results are discussed.

Including the perspectives of adolescents in the child welfare system in a substance-related critical injuries review: A model for youth engagement

Ms. Stephanie Martin (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Annie Smith (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Maya Peled (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Katie Horton (McCreary Centre Society)

Objectives: This presentation focuses on a project which canvassed the perspectives of young people in the child welfare system to inform policy and practice aimed at improving services for adolescents at risk of substance-related harms.

Substance-related critical injuries and deaths are an increasing concern in British Columbia (BC), Canada, and have disproportionately impacted adolescents involved in the child welfare system. Working in partnership with the British Columbia Office of the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY), this project sought to better understand substance use among this group of young people, and to gather their recommendations to ensure services and supports are responsive to their needs.

Method: Young people aged 13 to 24 (N=100) with recent experience of the child welfare system participated in one of 18 focus groups. The majority also completed a 15-item survey (N=81) and took part in a design activity to identify how communities can support adolescents to have a healthy relationship with substances.

Focus groups were conducted in urban and rural communities across BC, Western Canada at community-based services accessed by young people, residential substance use programs, and youth custody centres. Quantitative analysis of survey responses was conducted using SPSS 24 statistical software and a thematic analysis of the qualitative data was completed.

Results: Reasons young people identified for using substances included managing emotions, dealing with mental health challenges, having fun or relieving boredom, and family and peer influence. Participants described safer substance use as avoiding certain substances and methods of use and having reliable information about a substance and its source. Barriers to safer use included mistrust of statutory agencies, a lack of youth-specific and early intervention services, and previous experiences of judgmental or punitive responses to substance use.

Forty-two percent of survey respondents indicated not getting the support they needed for their substance use. Common reasons included not knowing where to go (68%), not having anyone they felt comfortable talking to (68%), and thinking it would not help (60%). However, the majority who accessed services found them helpful in addressing their substance use challenges. Among the most helpful were youth-specific services (e.g., youth drop-in centre, 88%; youth clinic, 82%), and specific substance use and mental health services (e.g., needle exchange/safe consumption site, 92%; telephone mental health counselling, 70%).

Recommendations from youth participants to reduce substance-related harms included increasing access to mental and emotional health supports, connecting adolescents with relatable mentors, offering counselling supports to young people bereaved as a result of an overdose or substance-related loss, offering access to supervised consumption sites and harm-reduction materials, and training foster parents to encourage safer substance use among young people in their care.

Conclusion: Findings from this project helped to guide a review by the RCY of substance-related critical injuries and deaths involving young people in the child welfare system in BC. Based on this review and the experiences and perspectives of youth participants in this project, the RCY made targeted recommendations to government agencies which hold responsibility for young people in the child welfare system to improve policy and practice to reduce substance-related harms among these young people.

Findings suggest that strategies to reduce harmful substance use need to not only address adolescents' current

use, but also their reasons for using substances to cope with the challenges in their lives. This project also highlights the value of including adolescents’ perspectives in areas they would not typically be engaged such as reviews of critical injuries and deaths, as it can provide context, contribute valuable insight, and offer a fresh lens through which to view findings in ways adults may not otherwise consider.

Including the Voices of Front Line Child Welfare Staff in Organizational Improvement Efforts: A Mixed Methods Study

Dr. Anne Farrell (Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago), Dr. Forrest Moore (Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago)

Background

Effective administration of child welfare requires careful stewardship of resources and support of front line staff responsible for day to day decisionmaking that determines child and family outcomes. Some US child welfare systems are privatized; administration is outsourced to private agencies. In this poster, we discuss research engagement with a nonprofit that had recently assumed responsibility for a merged entity previously consisting of two agencies. We sought to identify the critical ingredients of programmatic and organizational effectiveness and appraise challenges. In this poster we describe the process by which we appraised the local context and collected data across through interviews and focus groups with over 35 staff. Incorporating the voices of front line child welfare workers embeds staff perspectives into planning. The proposed poster is part of a co-constructed, collaborative evaluation intended to culminate in a longitudinal evaluation strategy that embeds continuous quality improvement, creates a learning culture, improves the use of research evidence, and engages collaborative design of solutions that improve outcomes.

Approach and Methods

Following iteration of proximal outcomes and CQI processes, we wished to gain understanding of staff perceptions of "what happens" during and after program enrollment. Short term performance data indicate the agency is fairly successful, however, staff turnover is high, and there is an unsustainable overreliance on congregate care. Aims of the engagement include obtaining clarity on programs:

- What are program components, which are perceived as critical, and how can they be implemented faithfully?
- What contextual and organizational factors contribute to and detract from effectiveness?
- How does programming reflect changes policy/regulation, evidence, population characteristics?
- How might shifts in process and outcome be accounted for in immediate
and longitudinal evaluation?

Following approval from the cognizant Institutional Review Board, we reviewed state and local child welfare policy and data. We then interviewed agency staff using protocols established for the study. We verified notes and conducted member checks then used content analysis to develop and validate emergent themes, with protocol questions as the primary organizing scheme (Tesch, 1990). For deeper subsequent data analysis, we used ATLAS.ti (Muhr, 2019) to categorize, organize, and code. We did not attempt to engage in coding or thematic analysis in isolation from rich context emerging from the policy and data review, data meetings, and related observations. We integrated and triangulated across source and method to extract a rich, contextualized set of themes (Flick, 2019). We consolidated findings, comparing and verifying themes. Inter-rater agreement occurred across 9 of 11 initial themes and, following consultation, we reached agreement on nine.

Findings

The 9 themes are: (1) Commitment and passion, (2) safety and safety culture, (3) humanism (4) primary and secondary trauma; (5) organizational relations and supports (recruitment, retention, development , advancement); (6) caseload; (7) workplace flexibility; (8) burnout and turnover, and (9) organizational culture, e.g., shared vision, values, norms, and perceptions that influence behavior. In the poster, we will provide a general definition/description of themes and offer examples, including illustrative quotes. Within sections we will include context from the scholarly literature that bridges our findings and the recommendations that appear in succeeding sections.

Discussion and Implications

The use of research evidence in child welfare is often hampered by workplace cultures that pose significant challenge to faithful application of well-supported interventions. In this poster we describe a collaborative research approach intended to elevate the voices of front line staff. The purpose was to provide a diagnostic understanding of structural and cultural elements that facilitate and hinder healthy culture, which affects staff retention, and influences child and family outcomes directly and indirectly. We will discuss themes, recommendations, and the continuing planning process.

Inclusion of Youth Perspectives in Employment Programming for Disconnected Youth

Prof. Mary Collins (Boston University School of Social Work), Ms. Adrianna Spindle-Jackson (Boston University School of Social Work)

Disconnected youth (those not in school and not working) are an important population requiring intervention. Recent research in the U.S. identified 4.6 million (11.7 percent) young people in the U.S. were disconnected, with variation among states and regions. Males are more likely to be disconnected than females and some racial/ethnic groups are more likely to be disconnected than others. The negative effects of disconnection from school and work at a young age are profound and long term. The proposed presentation has three aims: (1) understand the potential for employment opportunities for system-involved (child welfare, juvenile justice) youth; (2) identify ways in which a youth perspective is included in policy and program planning at the local level; (3) identify ways in which youth can make choices in employment and training systems.

Issues of unemployment are particularly relevant for system-involved youth. In several studies that tracked former foster youth (e.g., Macomber et al., 2008), research has identified high rates of unemployment in comparison to the general population of youth as well as low levels of income when employed. Negative effects on employment have also been found for youth involved with the justice system (e.g. Wiesner, Kim, & Capaldi, 2010). There are many reasons why these populations have challenges with employment: the circumstances (e.g., maltreatment, truancy, arrest) that originally led to their system involvement, resulting trauma that interferes with success in multiple ways, experiences of poverty and the generally poor schools found in low income communities, the many disruptions in life and schooling that negatively impact efforts to build educational and pre-employment skills, and the lack of resources and networks to aid in accessing academic and vocational opportunities.

This presentation reports data from two studies of local workforce development systems (in the U.S.) designed to provide employment and training opportunities to disconnected youth. Interviews were conducted with members of the thirty workforce development boards in diverse regions of the U.S. to address the research questions: (1) To what extent are youth perspectives included in planning and service delivery? (2) What are the mechanisms for including youth perspectives? (3) What is the impact of youth perspectives on decisions regarding policy and programming?

Phone interviews were conducted with 60 individuals representing state boards, local boards, and youth councils. Interviews included topics such as: interaction of board with youth councils; extent to which organizational partners understand special populations of youth, unique needs, developmental context, and positive youth development; indicators of youth-focused perspective (e.g. youth board at local level; system-involved youth expertise at state level); mechanisms for incorporating youth perspectives at policy, program, and case levels. Interview data is also supplemented by analysis of documents (e.g., the extent to which workforce development plans include youth perspectives) and publicly available data regarding youth enrollment and completion in employment programs.

The study has implications for further policy and program development regarding youth employment at state and local levels. Robust inclusion of authentic youth perspectives provides a critical mechanism for developing and implementing employment interventions that might more effectively serve the needs and interests of disconnected youth. This, in turn, may strengthen the developmental trajectory of system-involved youth in young adulthood toward more positive employment outcomes.

Increasing healthy eating and active living in the child welfare sector

Dr. Rachael Green (Monash), Prof. Helen Skouteris (Monash University)

Introduction: A national priority in Australia is to close the gap in health and social outcomes for those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged. One such group are children living in residential out-of-home care (OoHC). We have spent the last 10 years researching strategies to reduce the high prevalence of overweight/obesity in children living in residential OoHC. Our work is aligned with the unanimous call amongst policy makers for healthy lifestyle interventions to improve the health of children living in OoHC, and the prioritisation by the Australian Medical Association to break the cycle of intergenerational vulnerability through health-related capacity building.

Method: The need for the voices of young people in OoHC to be represented and included to better inform research, services, and policy by adopting co-design research practices has been well established. We have completed a randomised trial, and worked collaboratively across three government departments, community service organisations, and with young people with a lived experience to co-design preventative solutions to improve the health and wellbeing of children living in residential OoHC. This led to the development of the Healthy Eating, Active Living Matters (HEALing Matters) program. Using an implementation science approach, we are now upscaling HEALing Matters across Victoria.

Results: HEALing Matters is a Victorian Government funded online training package, which uses a trauma-informed philosophy to guide carers' understanding of the link between healthy lifestyle behaviours of the children they care for and improved physical, cognitive, social and emotional outcomes. Our preliminary findings have shown acceptance and commitment by carers to create a healthy home environment and positive lifestyle changes in the children.

Discussion: Our implementation road map (including our co-design methodologies), case study examples, and the HEALing Matters knowledge exchange platform will be presented.

Infants entering out-of-home care: developmental needs and service provision

Dr. Melissa O'Donnell (Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia), Mr. Fernando Lima (Australian Centre for Child protection), Dr. Stephanie Taplin (Australian Catholic University)

Objectives

In Australia and internationally there has been a rise in infants being placed in out-of-home care due to child protection concerns. With the rising number of infants entering the out-of-home care system the need to ensure that their developmental needs are met is essential. The objective of this study was to determine the health and developmental needs of infants entering the care system for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal infants, and examine service provision offered to meet their needs.

Methods

This is a retrospective cohort study using survey data from the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study as well as linked administrative data from the New South Wales Department of Health, Communities and Justice. There were 474 infants who entered out-of-home care and were linked to hospital and perinatal data. Developmental vulnerability was identified using a set criteria and logistic regression analysis conducted to investigate the likelihood of infants of receiving professional services for developmental delays.

Results

Of the 474 infants who entered care 70% were identified as developmentally vulnerable, with 23% pre-term, 21% low birth weight and 9% diagnosed with neonatal withdrawal syndrome. A large proportion were assessed as requiring intensive services (39%) as per the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and 20% assessed as below cut off for the Brief Infant Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment. Only 12% were identified by the carer as developmentally vulnerable with 9.7% of infants receiving services for developmental delay. However, 81% of those identified by carers as developmentally vulnerable were receiving services and no children not identified by carers received services.

Conclusions

Our study found that a high proportion (70%) of infants who entered care were developmentally vulnerable and this was similar for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal infants. Birth outcomes and standardised assessments conducted with these infants indicate high levels of developmental vulnerability. However only a small proportion (9.7%) were provided services to address developmental issues although most carers who identified issues were provided services. The findings from this study point to the importance of developmental assessment of infants that are entering care and the identification of developmental vulnerability and delays. The provision of early intervention services is essential for this group of high risk infants and will be important in optimising their health, as well as social and emotional outcomes.

Infants, Toddlers, and Child Protection - International Perspectives

Dr. Fred Wulczyn (University of Chicago, Chapin Hall), Prof. Harriet Ward (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Prof. Jane Barlow (University of Oxford)

We encourage readers of our abstract to view our prepared video. Because the collective session draws together international perspectives, the video and the collective session are organized around the rationale that underpins the International Network on Infants, Toddlers, and Child Protection. We hope, after seeing the video, that you will be interested in joining what promises to a dynamic conversation between presenters and the audience.

Regarding the aims of the network, please read what follows and the other session abstracts.

There is a substantial body of evidence pointing to infants and toddlers as a group of children likely to have contact with child protection systems. In some countries, infants are the children *most likely* to be referred to child protection agencies. There is as well a growing body of research evidence addressing (1) the long-term consequences of maltreatment in early childhood; (2) the factors that affect parenting; and (3) interventions that mitigate risk factors and promote protective factors. There is, however, very little research that places this body of evidence in a broader, comparative context. For example, why in advanced countries are such young children at greatest risk? What do these findings mean for child protection policy in the global north and global south? To what extent are existing social policy frameworks protective? What role does social exclusion play? Are public sector investments in programs to little, too late? How do we strengthen the use of evidence in policy and practice on behalf of these young, vulnerable children and their families?

To address these concerns, a group of academics and policy makers are working to form an international transdisciplinary network that will examine these compelling questions, promote comparative research, develop sound social policy frameworks, and strengthen practice.

For the symposium, members of the network will report to the wider EUSARF community findings from the first network meeting. In alignment with the framework adopted for the first network meeting, the symposium will address the following topics:

- The incidence of infant removal and the impact of infant removal
- The reasons for infant removal
- Interventions and other initiatives
- Gaps in knowledge

Given that there is little in the way of comparative research, gaps in knowledge will be a key theme across papers.

Infants, Toddlers, and Child Protection - Reasons for Removal

Prof. Harriet Ward (Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

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In this session, contributors will discuss the state of knowledge pertaining to why infants are removed from their homes. The range of issues covered will include contextual factors such as the role of poverty; political and policy factors such as the role of austerity, reduced access to abortions, and differences in the acceptability of adoption; and practice factors such as staff turnover, lack of early interventions, and poor pre-birth assessments. Among the concerns raised during the inaugural meeting of the Infant Network, the ethics of infant removal took centre stage. Questions central to these concerns include the lack of evidence-informed protocols for assessing risk, different perspectives on the termination of parental rights, and the high number of infants in institutional care.

Infants, Toddlers, and Child Protection - Successful interventions and Initiatives

Dr. Emily Keddell (University of Otago), Prof. Jane Barlow (University of Oxford)

There is a substantial body of evidence pointing to infants and toddlers as a group of children likely to have contact with child protection systems. In some countries, infants are the children *most likely* to be referred to child protection agencies. There is as well a growing body of research evidence addressing (1) the long-term consequences of maltreatment in early childhood; (2) the factors that affect parenting; and (3) interventions that mitigate risk factors and promote protective factors. There is, however, very little research that places this body of evidence in a broader, comparative context. For example, why in advanced countries are such young children at greatest risk? What do these findings mean for child protection policy in the global north and global south? To what extent are existing social policy frameworks protective? What role does social exclusion play? Are public sector investments in programs to little, too late? How do we strengthen the use of evidence in policy and practice on behalf of these young, vulnerable children and their families?

In this session, contributors will discuss interventions available to support birth mothers. In high income countries we take for granted that a continuum of services designed to address children and families' vulnerabilities and strengthen parental capacity should be available; however, in many low- and middle-income countries, very little support is currently available to prevent infant removals or placement of very young children in institutions.

Family preservation is the primary goal of most (though not all) interventions. However, both between and within countries there is a significant variability in terms of the amount of intervention provided, what this comprises, and which families are targeted for prevention. The provision of interventions depends on economic issues such as the availability of resources, but is also shaped by ideological and political factors. Most prevention and intervention services are delivered in health or social care settings, and provision may be of variable quality or unequally distributed. Most are *not* evidence-based. However, some countries are testing evidence-based parenting programs. Concerns about the high number of women who are sequentially separated from several infants have also led to the development of programs designed to break the pregnancy removal cycle.

Nevertheless, off-the-shelf interventions are insufficient on their own to improve the wellbeing of children and families. Effective interventions to support birth families need guidelines to determine which families receive support. Families need to be able to access services that address the parents' key problems (such as mental health, alcohol abuse or domestic abuse) and support them in the task of parenting. The latter may involve attendance at a parenting program and the offer of other types of service, many of which are only available in high income countries. These include solution-focused brief therapy; multi-systemic family therapy and functional family therapy. Some services, such as the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) combine both parental interventions and parenting support. Some evidence-based interventions, such as Parents Under Pressure, have been modified to be delivered as part of a children's social care service, with very positive results.

Infants, Toddlers, and Child Protection - The incidence and impact of removal

Dr. Fred Wulczyn (University of Chicago)

We encourage readers of our abstract to view our prepared video. Because the collective session draws together international perspectives, the video and the collective session are organized around the rationale that underpins the International Network on Infants, Toddlers, and Child Protection. We hope, after seeing the video, that you will be interested in joining what promises to a dynamic conversation between presenters and the audience.

Regarding the aims of the network, please read what follows and the other session abstracts.

There is a substantial body of evidence pointing to infants and toddlers as a group of children likely to have contact with child protection systems. In some countries, infants are the children *most likely* to be referred to child protection agencies. There is as well a growing body of research evidence addressing (1) the long-term consequences of maltreatment in early childhood; (2) the factors that affect parenting; and (3) interventions that mitigate risk factors and promote protective factors. There is, however, very little research that places this body of evidence in a broader, comparative context. For example, why in advanced countries are such young children at greatest risk? What do these findings mean for child protection policy in the global north and global south? To what extent are existing social policy frameworks protective? What role does social exclusion play? Are public sector investments in programs to little, too late? How do we strengthen the use of evidence in policy and practice on behalf of these young, vulnerable children and their families?

In this session, we will review the evidence regarding infant removals from Wales, England, Hungary, Australia, Canada, the US, Ireland, Germany, France, and Scandinavia. Among the themes, the difficulty gathering data that identifies the number of infants correctly will be a focus. In many jurisdictions, age at removal is recorded, but whether the removal being counted is a ‘first removal’ is often unclear. Among other implications, reporting practices may understate the number of infants coming into care.

Regarding the impact of removal, too little research is available in any one country let alone comparative research across multiple countries. New evidence from the US regarding time spent in out-of-home care as a fraction of total childhood will be discussed as a model for future research.

Innovative approaches to working with vulnerable young people - Creating Bright Futures: remodeling a work experience programme to improve education and employment horizons for children in care.

Ms. Jo Dixon (Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York), Ms. Jade Ward (Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York), Ms. Amy Mook (Child Welfare Research Group, University of York)

This paper presents a work experience and skills development programme that was adapted for children in care in one local authority. It highlights the innovative elements of the programme, the benefits for care-experienced participants and the impetus and advantages for employers who provided the work-related opportunities.

Background

Research indicates poor education and employment outcomes for many care-experienced young adults. Statistics show that care leavers are less likely than other young adults to attend University and that those aged 19-21 are almost three times more likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to all 19-21-year olds in England. In addition to the personal and emotional costs of lower participation in EET, research indicates high costs to society and the economy. The causes of lower participation amongst care leavers are located in the reasons that brought them into care, the age they enter and exit care, the support they receive during and post-care and poor high-school qualifications.

A 2015 study of the employment journeys of care leavers who were doing well in education highlighted the protective factors that enabled positive progress. Amongst these were young people's self-esteem, confidence and aspirations, and high expectations and support from carers, teachers and social workers. Overcoming negative stereotyping and stigma were also evident.

The programme

Bright Futures aimed to instil protective factors via supported opportunities and partnership-working towards the shared goal of improving the employment prospects of children in care. It was adapted from an existing model (Starting Blocks) that had supported care leavers to increase and improve their employment related skills, knowledge and opportunities. It brought together York Cares Charity, Children's Services, education and employers to develop and co-deliver a menu of work experience and skills-development opportunities. A further aim was to raise awareness of the care population amongst employers.

The earlier programme had highlighted the vulnerability of care leavers and the post-care barriers to finding employment at a time of transition. Importantly, it identified a need to begin working with this group earlier - before they left care and school.

In response, the Bright Futures programme created several stand-alone and mix-and-match opportunities aimed at children in care aged 11-17. These included 'Behind the Scenes' tours with employers, skills workshops delivered by employers, and work placements in a range of organisations.

Methods

Data gathered from 51 stakeholders participating in Bright Futures included children in care (33), foster carers (5), employers (8), and staff from Children's Services and York Cares (5) via interviews, surveys and programme monitoring records. Participatory methods were used to engage children and Bright Futures staff in developing the evaluation questions. One care-experienced young person undertook a work placement with the evaluation team.

Findings

By beginning the intervention sooner with children in care, the remodeled programme offered space to shape children's understanding of the career options open to them and raise aspirations. Opportunities to develop work-related experiences and skills offered children scope to build confidence in their abilities, inspire them to formulate and pursue career goals, and encourage the education engagement needed to achieve their goals, thereby building a firmer foundation for post-care EET journeys.

The range of opportunities was valued by children, most of whom undertook more than one. Further effort, however, was needed to reach dis-engaged children and those with high needs. Employers reported benefiting from providing opportunities, including a greater understanding of the needs and strengths of the care population. Reasons for providing opportunities included altruism ‘to give back to vulnerable groups’ and meeting their corporate social responsibility. Crucially, the programme for children in care was considered an investment in the future local workforce.

Innovative approaches to working with vulnerable young people-PLANEA Program: an innovative online tool to develop independent living skills for young people in children's homes

Ms. Laura García-Alba (University of Oviedo), Ms. Federica Gullo (University of Oviedo), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo)

Background

Maintaining support and care for those young people reaching adulthood without a family alternative, such as reunification, is one of the main challenges faced by residential child care nowadays. International literature has shown the importance of supporting these young people in their transition to live independently as adults, providing them with comprehensive supporting services in key areas, such as financial and housing aid, training and employment, etc. However, the transition to independent life from the protective environment of children's homes also requires a large array of every-day skills in order to be successful. For this reason, service providers have implemented different tools or programs to train young people in these skills, such as the Umbrella program, which was used in several countries in Europe for this purpose since it was published in 2000. This program was designed as a paper-and-pencil book of activities to be completed by young people and constituted a very interesting proposal to start developing their independent living skills from children's homes, including in Spain since it was translated in 2006. However, as the technological development of the last two decades has completely transformed not only the possibilities that online learning environments can offer but also the skills needed to be an independent citizen in our information and knowledge society, this paper-and-pencil format was no longer attractive and up to date for young people preparing to leave care nowadays.

Methods

On that basis, we aimed to design a new and engaging independent life skills training program to be implemented in an online platform and be used with young people aged 14-18 living in residential child care: PLANEA Program. The Program included activities for 9 areas of content, ranging from the most practical every-day tasks (cooking, managing a budget, looking for a job, etc.) to more reflective or legal aspects (such as family relationship, voting in elections or managing a conflictive situation) or online-related skills (online shopping or banking, online applications, etc.).

Results

The main innovative feature of PLANEA allows key residential workers to invite their young people to enter the learning system on a computer, tablet or smartphone and to design a selection of activities and contents depending on an individual plan based on specific needs of each adolescent. The activities are then completed in close partnership between the youth and their key social educator, using a participatory approach to promote the active involvement of youths in their own skill development. PLANEA Program has been piloted and tested with a small sample of 22 dyads (key social educator – young person) in residential child care in Spain. Initial results show a high level of general satisfaction with the platform, which was considered by educators as easy to use and attractive (M = 4.31, M = 4.06, respectively, in a 1-5 scale). Young people showed similar but lower scores (M = 3.92, M = 3.75) at this aspects. Activities were also better rated by practitioners in a series of aspects (easy, entertaining, debate-promoting, varied, relevant topics) than they were considered by young people, except for the variety. However, most workers agreed that the program helped young people develop important competencies for their future, identifying flexibility of the program as its main strength, although they also found it very useful to have a structured set of objectives designed to cover in detail most of the areas of competence.

Conclusions

The paper will discuss the main innovative features of the Program and the creative and participatory methods that underpin its use and its further development.

Innovative approaches to working with vulnerable young people. - Evaluation of the Shared Lives Innovation: Placing young people leaving care with home carers to support transition to adulthood and facilitate family and social networks.

Dr. Zinnia Mitchell-Smith (Manchester Metropolitan University), Ms. Ann Potter (Manchester Metropolitan University), Dr. Sue Caton (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Background and Methods

The Department for Education in the UK has funded a range projects under the Children's Social Care Innovation programme, including innovative schemes to support the transitions of young people leaving care into independence and adulthood. Shared Lives represents a new option within this range of innovations, some of which are also explored in this symposium. Shared Lives involves a network of local schemes offering a service where carers share their own homes with people who need support, providing a family and community environment. This provides an additional option for young people with more complex needs who may benefit from an approach focused on 'interdependence' within a family and community setting, rather than an immediate transition to 'independence'.

The paper presented focuses on the independent evaluation of the Shared Lives 16+ Care Leavers innovation across seven UK schemes. The evaluation was also funded by the Department for Education. Methods included: interviews and workshops with young people, carers and stakeholders; analysis of monitoring data; surveys on young people's wellbeing and development during the placement, along with a break even cost benefit analysis.

Findings

Shared Lives was previously an adult social care service, findings will be presented in relation to the adaptation and extension of the service to offer placements for young people from age 16. This will highlight key considerations for transitions from children's services to adult's services, the need for wider provision for young people with complex needs who are leaving care, and the importance of the integration of children's and adult's services in supporting transitions.

Findings will also be discussed in relation to outcomes for young people leaving care who are placed with Shared Lives carers, in relation to the government priority areas of: stable accommodation; education, employment and training; physical and emotional health and wellbeing and resilience to unsafe behaviours. This reflects the areas where young people leaving care experience poorer outcomes (Stein, 2006; Dixon, 2008).

In particular, the experiences and voice of young people placed through the service will be featured. The research identified the value of this service for young people transitioning from children's social care with learning disabilities and additional needs, providing a higher level of support within a family and community environment, as an alternative to independent living provision or residential care. Themes from the qualitative analysis indicate the importance of relationships with carers, family and community; consistency and stability; choice and autonomy and a person centred approach to the care provided.

Stein, M. (2006), "Research Review: Young people leaving care", *Child & Family Social Work*, 11: 3, pp. 273-279.

Dixon, J. (2008). Young people leaving care: Health, well-being and outcomes. Child & Family Social Work, 13(2), pp. 207-217

Innovative residential care for adolescents in England: Learning from No Wrong Door

Dr. Caroline Cresswell (University of York), Dr. Lisa Holmes (Rees Centre)

For the invited symposium 'What works in Therapeutic Residential Care: Messages from research' by Jorge F. del Valle & Amaia Bravo, University of Oviedo

No Wrong Door (NWD) is an innovative approach to working with adolescents in out-of-home care or at risk of entering care, those whom are likely to experience instability and long-term placement within the care system to the detriment of their outcomes. NWD provides a wraparound support service for adolescents through replacing the traditional residential group home approach with 'hubs' involving an integrated, dedicated team of multi-agency professionals (from health and police services) and key workers. The hub home concept offers integrated multi-agency support for those adolescents with the most complex needs and sustained relationships through therapeutically informed practice adopted by staff. The presentation will draw upon the learnings taken from an evaluation of an earlier implementation of NWD in the county of North Yorkshire, England (Lushey et al., 2017) and align these with forthcoming findings from an evaluation of an adaption of the model within Bradford city, West Yorkshire, England. Bradford B Positive Pathways (BPP) provides integrated care for those adolescents with the most complex needs. BPP adopts and adapts the NWD multi-agency hub concept by delivering integrated support through three specialist residential group homes for children aged 8- 16 and an integrated outreach service for adolescents at risk of entering care through an emergency short-stay home for prevention of family breakdown. BPP provides care to children and adolescents with a set of complex and interdependent emotional, social and cognitive needs that require long-term, consistent support that are sometimes neglected in favour of crisis-led interventions. The BPP service is delivered by dedicated multi-agency specialists working alongside residential-outreach practitioners within the multi-agency care hubs, including health practitioners (psychologists, speech and language therapists and an occupational specialist), police and community support officers, and an education specialist, which maintains fidelity with the NWD model.

The presentation will report findings from the two mixed methods evaluations on the implementation and operation of NWD across North Yorkshire and Bradford. The characteristics of young people receiving a service through BPP, and their interactions with specialists, are recorded via a child level data (CLD) tracker. The presentation will offer impact findings of longitudinal data collected through the CLD tracker and will evidence the impact of the model on intended outcomes relating to health and wellbeing, placement stability and association with risk. These findings will be augmented with the voice of the child, drawn from qualitative interviews with children and adolescents involved in BPP to derive their experiences and perspectives of the model. The paper will also provide aligned evidence to suggest that embedding a common model of care has provided consistency in available support and strengthen relationships between staff and children and adolescents in placement or receiving outreach support. It will focus upon the added value of the integration of the specialist workers to the care of children and adolescents through providing case examples of the direct work with children and adolescents. It will also explore the perspectives of the workforce in how the NWD approach contributes to improved outcomes and enhances their roles.

NWD has won several awards and is being adopted and adapted in a number of other English local authorities. The presentation will also offer learnings from the evaluations of NWD to assess applicability in other international contexts. The findings presented within this presentation ultimately contribute to the emerging evidence base on the NWD innovation and how this may promote positive outcomes for children and adolescents in residential care or at risk of entering care.

Integrating child perspective into practise in residential care-did we learn anything from the research?

Prof. Ivana Borić (University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences), Prof. Marijana Majdak (University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law), Mrs. Andrea Ćosić (University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences)

Respect for children's opinions and children's perspectives, especially in the context of the children's participation rights should be an indispensable part of all policies and practices when working with children. The modern age focuses on the moral and professional imperative of listening to the "voice" of children as a way of empowering them and influencing the improvement of services. Nevertheless, the perspectives and experiences of children are still insufficiently represented in the models and understanding of social problems and very often decisions related to children are based on information provided about them by adults, which can be incomplete at best, as adults cannot think, feel or perceive life the way children do.

In last three decades in Croatia there is a growing number of researches focusing on child perspective, pointing out some very critical and important issues related to quality of residential care but without any significant change in everyday practise. In this paper we shall present conclusions of relevant research in residential care in Croatia in last 30 years regarding child perspective together with key processes in that area. The analysis includes scientific papers, research reports, doctoral thesis and master thesis available in open access as well as desk review of relevant policy documents. Results show that children are very competent partners and that they clearly recognize most problematic areas of residential care, often even better than adults. Research data show that children are continuously advocating for better quality relationships, affectionate and caring approach and appreciation of their rights - especially the right to be heard and to participate in the process of care. On other hand, what we can see from the time perspective in research, nothing has been changed in the practise to the better. Quite contrary it seems as children has grown their voices to be louder but that has not affected adults to make effort for better standards of care and service. It seems that adults (policy makers, professionals) still perceive child perspective as more decorative element and not as imperative for better services.

Integration of principles of experiential learning in Outward Bound programs for children and youth

Ms. Marija Mažić (University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences), Ms. Ivana Borić (University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences), Mrs. Andrea Ćosić (University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences)

Experiential Pedagogy is a discipline focused on exposing individuals and groups to new experiences and reflect upon them, which can encourage development of new knowledge and skills that can be transferred into everyday life. Outward Bound is an organisation dedicated to personal development by using experiential learning and outdoor education. Its mission is to encourage participants in discovering and developing their potential through challenging experiences in unfamiliar settings. As with any other intervention, it is highly important for the practitioners to follow the theory on which the method is based and to adapt the mechanisms and tools to the needs of participants. With experiential learning still being a rather new discipline, this importance gains even more weight – we are still unaware of the full scope of unintended consequences if we stray and base our program on inappropriate tools, methods and techniques.

The aim of this paper is to gain insights into perception of professionals who work in Outward Bound Croatia concerning following issues – how well the practitioners understand the theory that lies beneath the discipline itself and in which way the principles of experiential learning are integrated into their work. Research is based on qualitative methodology, using focus group. Three groups of professionals were included in the study: professionals that are responsible for program development, professionals that implement the program and work directly with participants and professionals that have experience with both of these roles.

Results show how different groups of professionals perceive the theory of experimental learning and how they integrate principles of experiential learning in programs with children and youth. Besides that, results show possibilities of involving the perspective of children and young people in planning, implementing, adapting and evaluating the experiential learning programs.

Key words: experiential learning, theory-based, program

Internalizing Symptoms Among Youth in Foster Care: Prevalence and Associations with Exposure to Maltreatment

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Background: Youth in out-of-home care have often experienced multiple types of maltreatment prior to placement and have higher risk for internalizing (anxiety and depression) symptoms compared to general youth populations. However, for youth in foster care, research on specific profiles of internalizing symptoms and its associations to specific types of maltreatment is limited.

Objectives: The main purpose of this study is to gain knowledge on internalizing symptoms among youth in foster care and of the associations between internalizing symptoms and maltreatment. We investigate if specific forms of maltreatment (physical/emotional abuse, physical/emotional neglect, and sexual abuse) are differentially associated with subtypes of anxiety and depressive symptoms, and whether there is a cumulative effect of maltreatment exposure regarding internalizing symptoms. The potential interaction between gender on the association between maltreatment and internalizing symptoms are examined.

Method:A sample of 303 youth in foster care (46.5 % girls) participated. The youth had a mean age of 14.8 years (*SD*= 2.0) and had on average spent 6.7 years (*SD* = 4.3) in foster care. Youth completed the child versions of the Spence Children Anxiety Scale, the Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire, and the Child and Adolescent Trauma Screen. Statistical analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, t-tests, Chi Square tests, and multiple regression analysis.

Results: Girls reported higher levels of internalizing symptoms compared to boys. Compared to youth community samples, more youth in foster care reported symptoms-levels above cut-off. Social- and generalized anxiety (ES = 0.78–0.88) were the most frequently reported subtypes of anxiety symptoms, across gender. Among the three forms of maltreatment, sexual abuse showed the strongest association with internalizing symptoms, followed by neglect. We identified a cumulative effect of maltreatment exposure, i.e., exposure to increased numbers of maltreatment types were associated with increased levels of internalizing symptoms (ES = 0.21–0.22). Associations between all types of maltreatment and anxiety symptoms were stronger for girls compared to boys. For depressive symptoms, the association was stronger for girls, but only when exposed to neglect.

Conclusions: The findings indicate that both type and total load of maltreatment exposure are important predictors of risk for internalizing symptoms in youth in foster care. Our results indicate that girls are more vulnerable to developing internalizing problems after experiences of maltreatment, compared to boys. This study stresses the importance of broad screening of maltreatment and internalizing symptoms to meet the needs of youth in foster care.

International Advances in Understanding Children's Subjective Well-Being: The Importance of Including Looked-After-Children

Prof. Colette McAuley (Honorary Professor Cascade Research Centre, Cardiff University), Dr. Jen Hampton (Cardiff University)

In an effort to advance our understanding of children's perspectives on their well-being, the International Society of Child Indicators has supported both the quantitative Children's World Survey and the qualitative Children's Understandings of Well-Being Cross-National Project.

The first Children's World Survey in Wales involving 2627 children aged 10-13 years was completed recently (Hampton et al 2018). Major findings will be shared. For the purposes of this conference, one of the most interesting findings was a significant difference between the subjective well-being of children in foster care and those in the general population. Children in foster care had lower well-being and lower satisfaction with relationships with others.

The first Children's Understanding of Well-Being (CUWB) study in the UK was completed with 92 eleven year old children in the general population in England (McAuley 2019) and sought children's own views on what people, places and things they regarded as important to their sense of well-being. Relationships with family and friends were seen as central to their well-being. Places, things and activities were often inter-related with these relationships, although activities were valued in themselves for skill development. The children completed Well-being Maps, participated in focus groups and created films (McAuley, 2019).

Following on from both UK studies, we are planning a qualitative CUWB study of children in foster care to explore in greater depth what they see as important to their sense of well-being, both to better understand the results from the survey but also to identify areas for Social Work policy and practice development to enhance their well-being.

Introducing life story work in Estonian substitute care: experience from a participatory action research.

Dr. Judit Strömpl (Tartu University), Ms. Ingrid Sindi (Ta), Mrs. Ave Alliksaar-Tamm (Social Insurance Board)

Background and purpose: The implementation of new Child Protection Act in 2016 in Estonia brought along several structural changes. During these significant changes the need for developing the content of substitute care became evident. The biggest problem in Estonia is still too little number of foster families and too big number of children in residential care. Research on situation about residential and foster care, but also adoption show that there is a need for developing supporting methods for parents and carers working with children's personal and identity development should be more in focus of care. Life story work as a relatively well-known supporting method in several Western countries, is not used in Estonia. First step of introduction of direct scribing method while analyzing children's bios was done during an ethnographic research in 2014-15 (Sindi & Strömpl 2019). This first experience encouraged us to do the next steps and start with introducing life story work in Estonian substitute care. The current presentation will show the first phase of a participatory action research, during which we where focusing on the following questions: What kind of support services are offered to children and carers in substitute care? How are they satisfied with supporting services today? What children and carers (including foster and adoptive parents) know and think about life story work methods? What is the effect of using life story work exercises?

Methods: In the first phase of participatory action research, we first, collected and analyzed data to map the situation in Estonian substitute care; second, adapted and introduced life story work (LSW) methods to key persons in substitute care (policy makers and managers of some institutions and voluntary foster and adoptive parents); third, invited voluntary participants foster and adoptive parents to exercise of LSW methods. Two residential care institutions, one SOS family, two foster and two adoptive family, altogether 14 children (5 boys and 9 girls) between 4 and 15 of age, were involved into process so far. The second period of participatory action research is planned from September 2021 when the preliminary result will be analyzed in depth and the number of participants will be increased. This project is financed by Estonian Research Council Grant PRG700.

Findings: First results show that both residential, foster, and adoptive care miss some specific supportive methods for developing children's personality and identity. There is not much done with removed children's traumatic past. As a rule, past events are ignored in care as the caring personnel fear of re-traumatizing and they have insufficient skills and knowledge to deal with these sensitive topics. Relations birthparents of removed children became more open to discussion in substitute care, however this openness depend on concrete cases and risks that parents can offer to children in care. Parents and carers are enthusiastic in both the concept of life story work and in testing the exercises that life story work offers. First exercises with children show better communication between children and parents/carers as they enable them to communicate to important topics for the child.

Conclusion: In this first phase of research, we can already claim that substitute parents and carers are not satisfied with existing support, and therefore they are enthusiastic toward implementation of additional programs, including life story work. It is also worth noting that the specific Estonian context need lot of work with adaption of LSW methods that do not work always very well in Estonia. Children's storytelling capacity is rather insufficient. Therefore, more attention should be paid to exercises that help children's development of storytelling skills.

Investigating Child Abuse in Finland – A Parent Perspective

Mrs. Essi Julin (Tampere University/Faculty of Social Sciences)

Objectives

This ongoing pre-reviewed doctoral research aimed to find out how parents experience the multi-professional and inter-organizational investigation process of a suspected sexual or physical abuse of their child. Research aimed also to find out, what kind of consequences there are both in family relations and people themselves from a parent perspective, when the investigation process takes place.

In Finland almost all child abuse cases, including disciplinary violence, are considered as a crime and investigated by police. They can ask help from one of the multi-professional Forensic Units for Children and Adolescents. These units operate under the jurisdiction of University hospitals. Child welfare authorities are also involved in family life when there is a suspected child abuse case. This kind of heavy state intervention in private family life can be justified by including in the process those who are involved and treating them fairly.

Method

Research is qualitative and the nationwide data consists of 15 narrative interviews of parents, whose child has been a suspected victim of abuse in a criminal investigation. Parents were asked to tell their story about the investigation process. Parent or other adult who is taking care of a child can be either suspect of a crime him-/herself or a concerned party. Data is analyzed using mainly inductive thematic content analysis and typologies.

Results

During the criminal investigation of a child, aspects of procedural justice are important to parents. From the point of view of the parents it is important, how they are treated by authorities. They also want to feel that they are part of the process and they want to get enough knowledge during the process. It is also important that people can feel that they can trust authorities.

When the abuse case is considered as a crime more clearly by authorities, the overall experience from a parent perspective is more positive. Processes and practices are simpler and the whole process is usually shorter. When the suspected crime is not that serious in criminal sense, for example disciplinary violence, or the whole case is ambiguous, the process can be long and unclear from the parent perspective.

There are also lots of different (unintended) consequences in family relations and people themselves both because of the suspected abuse itself and practices during the investigation. This kind of exceptional circumstance has an effect on personal feelings and performance in different aspects of life. It also effects on relations between children, parents and other family members for example changing the nature and practices of communicating with each other.

Conclusions

Overall the Finnish system works best, when the suspected crime is serious and there is a shared understanding between authorities and parents, that there actually is a suspected crime. In spite of the nature of the suspicion, all of these investigations should happen without delay and authorities should remember the elements of procedural justice, when dealing with the parents. Especially creating trust is important, because experiences of one process can have an effect on how people trust the authorities also in the future. When the threshold for criminal investigation is low, there should be enough resources and structures in society to handle these cases in appropriate way. Different cases should be handled with bearing the child’s best interest in mind.

When there is a suspected child abuse case, it can be a crisis to a parent. It disrupts both the family life and people themselves. It is important to recognize that family relations are connected and embedded. When taking care of the child’s matter, authorities should always remember that there are other family members involved as well.

Investigating protective factors for middle aged adults with experience of care and maltreatment: perspectives from history and psychology

Dr. Aoife O'Higgins (Magdalen College Oxford), Dr. Jono Taylor (Magdalen College Oxford)

Background Research has documented the poor outcomes of care, with the bulk of the evidence focussing on what happens in childhood. Longitudinal analyses with a focus on long-term outcomes are lacking, however. Moreover, we know of no research which has investigated factors which predict positive outcomes in an older care population.

Objectives Informed by archival data and first-hand narrative accounts of care experience, our aim was to identify protective factors for educational and physical and mental health outcomes of adults with care experience.

Methods Using prospectively collected data from a cohort of people born in 1958, in the first step we compared the middle age outcomes of people with care experience in childhood and a matched sample of people who experienced maltreatment but who had no care experience. We then investigated whether a series of individual, family and community level factors predicted better outcomes for both groups. Historical data informed both the selection of protective factors we investigated as well as the interpretation of our findings.

Findings Adults who experienced maltreatment and care had significantly worse educational and physical and mental health outcomes than people in the general population. Analyses of protective factors are currently ongoing.

DiscussionAs well as discussing of the findings of these analyses, this presentation will discuss the opportunities and challenges of bringing together historical, psychological and epidemiological methods to investigate the middle age outcomes of people who experience adversity in childhood.

Invited symposium: 'Decision-making and Participation of Children in the Child Protection System - The Role of Evidence for the Implementation of Children's Right: Children Participate in Evidence Creation and Decision-making

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Dr. Roberta Ruggiero (Senior Research and Teaching Associate, Centre for Children's Rights Studies University of Geneva)

Background

The adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989, imposed a broadening of the notion of children's well-being and led to higher attention being given to the fulfilment of children's specific human rights. This generated the need to collect more statistical data on childhood conditions and to evaluate policy performance in terms of children's rights implementation. As a result, governmental and non-governmental entities operating in the human rights field progressively adopted a stronger commitment to developing evidence-based policies both within national welfare systems and at international level[1].

Current approaches are based on the assumption that the list of rights stated in the international Treaties, are 'minimum standards' that need to be fulfilled through the setting of evidence-based child protection systems[2]. Supposing that flows of scientific evidence should be understood as a human rights implementation vehicle, we assert that researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners are all part of the democratic chain of implementation agents of the *human rights normative framework*[3],including child participation. Notwithstanding, the process through which evidence is produced and the ethical and political commitment to endorse material consequences on children's lives remain limited[4].

Objectives

The paper discusses the role of children in the evidence creation for developing rights-based child protection policies and strategies.

Method

This preliminary research is meant to further the understanding of how two paradigms *(1) evidence-based policymaking/practice and (2) a children's rights' normative framework*, can be integrated for a positive impact on children's lives. It examines more specifically the role of scientific evidence for effective children's rights fulfilment within child-protection systems and led to the design of a preliminary operational framework combining both paradigms.

Discussion

Childhood is a complex phenomenon, which cannot be addressed adequately from any single disciplinary and mono-professional angle. Therefore, the elaboration of the framework endeavours to harness the exchange of cross-disciplinary ideas and professional experiences in order to produce new knowledge and refine current understanding and to yield new and perhaps unexpected insights that enrich our efforts to produce knowledge that matters. Based on this theoretical assumption and with specific attention to child participation, the paper discusses what we know about the use of evidence in the children's rights field, how it improves policy outcomes and fulfilment of children's rights and the challenges associated with creation and use of evidence.

Results

Human rights contribute to the crystallisation of the connection between the human rights normative framework and the process of creation and use of scientific evidence for policy development, as well as in the establishment and evaluation of child protection systems. Nonetheless, evidence is not necessarily always recognized as a key component in the fulfilment of human rights and as a vehicle to voice children's opinions in the development and implementation processes of policies and interventions.

[1] There is a good number of experiences in this direction, such as Human Rights Indicators

–OHCHR https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Indicators/Pages/HRIndicatorsIndex.aspx, GlobalChild https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/globalchild/our-projects/globalchildproject/, Belgian National Child Rights Indicators: https://ncrk-cnde.be/en/projects/nouvelle-traduction-20-indicateurs-nationaux-droits-de-l-enfant/, Eurochild, Childonomics:https://www.eurochild.org/projects/childonomics/

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Involvement of children and young people in care order decision-making – a Danish perspective

Mrs. Mette Lausten (VIVE - The Danish Center for Social Science Research), Mr. Hans Kloppenborg (VIVE - The Danish Center for Social Science Research)

Background: Young people's right to be involved in decision-making affecting their own lives is stated in both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and in the Danish Social Services Act. The Convention determines that children must be heard and that their views have to be taken into account in accordance with age and maturity. In addition, the Social Services Act state that the municipal authority is obliged to hold an involving interview with the child or young person prior to decision making on e.g. inclusion in preventive programs or explicit care orders as well as by revising the action plan for the child or young person (Article 48). Apparently, there is considerable focus on children's and young people's rights to be involved. However, a number of studies document that the involvement of vulnerable young people can be difficult to implement in practice. Two recently published reviews of children's participation in child protection both conclude that "in general, children have few opportunities to participate in decisions that impact their lives regardless of their willingness to participate", and that most of the studies reviewed primarily draw on qualitative methods and are focused on reports of a relatively small number of young people or caseworkers. Nevertheless, these studies have contributed significantly to our understanding of what involvement of children and young people entails as well as its underlying processes.

In order to supplement the amount of qualitative research our purpose is here to present the results of a study using a quantitative approach with many respondents to investigate the involvement of vulnerable young people in case processing. The advantage of this approach is that the level of involvement of vulnerable young people can be elucidated in a general and representative way. In addition, correlations between young people's involvement and other factors such as socio-economic background and young people's well-being can be analysed. The two main research questions are: (1) How involved are young people in their own case processing? (2) What is the relationship between involvement and background characteristics of the young people?

Method and data: The analysis draws on a survey amongst approx. 2.200 children and young people in out-of-home care or a specific preventive intervention with a one-to-one contact person. We combine the survey data with administrative data to include school performance, school absence, and parental background characteristics. Based on the responses to survey we have constructed a formative index for young person's involvement in own case processing.

Preliminary results: Our findings show, that there are big differences in children's and young people's perceived involvement in own case processing. Some are well informed about the decision making process, have committed and dedicated caseworkers, and feel that they are able to influence the caseworkers' decisions about their lives. However, some children and youth experience their own possibilities of involvement as being quite poor.

In addition to describing differences in children and young people's perceived involvement in their case, we also investigate how perceived involvement is related to factors such as parents socio-economic background, well-being of the young persons (measured by the SDQ), and variables of school-performance. Preliminary results show a considerable coexistence of poor well-being and poor involvement. Our survey-based approach gives room for a broader picture of involvement of young people with different levels of vulnerability. By sampling a relatively large proportion of the target group, we are able to show specific differences in involvement despite the relatively high attrition rate that usually follows surveys amongst vulnerable respondents. Consequently, we argue that questionnaire-based surveys can help to nuance the understanding of the child involvement challenges.

Involving parents in residential youth care. How is family-centered treatment related to family outcomes?

Ms. Emily Tang (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Prof. Annemiek Harder (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Prof. Chris Kuiper (University of Amsterdam), Dr. Amaranta de Haan (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Families that face the possibility of having a child to be placed out-of-home often have complex problems in multiple domains, such as parental or youth's psychosocial problems, parenting issues, and a lack of a supporting social network. Studies show that residential youth care associates with some improvement in children's and adolescents' problem behavior, but the chances drop that these improvements are maintained when youth return to homes where family problems, such as parental stress, still exist. It is therefore crucial to understand which factors are related to better family functioning. Studies often find a positive relationship between family involvement and better treatment outcomes in children. Children, as well as their parents, can benefit from treatment which is targeted at family functioning and involve the family in youth's treatment, rather than only individual treatment. In family-centered treatment, parents and siblings are involved in the treatment of youth and can participate in the decision-making around the care process. For example, families can decide what information they want to share with the professionals, what kind of treatment they would like to receive, and what their conditions are of participating in treatment. Contrary to professional-centered care, the professional collaborates with the family in finding ways to solve their problems, instead of deciding on what is best for this family on his or her own. By giving families a voice in the decision-making, chances improve that they will stay involved and engage in the treatment. Despite promising findings regarding family involvement in the treatment of youth, no overview study has been conducted that specifically examines how family involvement influences treatment outcomes in residential youth care. However, a systematic review can contribute in tackling several constraints in the study of family involvement in residential treatment. Firstly, there is a lack of clear operationalization of family involvement and family-centered practices. For instance, family involvement is often measured as attendance, but the quality of family's engagement in treatment is far less often included. However, actual parental engagement in the child's treatment can differ substantially between parents with similar attendance rates. Next to different operationalizations of family involvement, interventions that are family-oriented also differ in type and content. These different measures and practices of family-centered treatment limits the comparison of study results. Thereby, studies that analyze changes in the family or parents during the treatment are also limited and parents' views of services have seldom been included in family-centered practice research. As a result, guidelines or best practices for specific practices in family-centered interventions have not yet been established. The present study comprises a systematic review of empirical research on the associations between family-centered treatment and family outcomes of residential care. The aim of this study is to present an overview of how family involvement or engagement in treatment is measured across different studies, how family-centered practices are carried out in residential youth care, and which family outcomes (e.g. family functioning or parental stress) are associated with family-centered practices. A systematic review will be conducted to examined whether, how, and to what extent families change during or after family-centered treatment and how families experience involvement in residential youth care. This study will provide a systematic overview of the available evidence in this area and thereby generate substantive knowledge about how and to what extent family outcomes can improve in family-centered residential youth care, which is crucial for our understanding of how residential youth care can establish long lasting positive treatment effects for youth.

Is Anyone Listening to the Children? An Exploration of Child Engagement within Florida's Child Welfare System

Ms. Melissa Johnson (University of South Florida), Dr. Mary Armstrong (University of South Florida)

Historically, child welfare interventions were largely imposed upon children and families. While professionals claimed to act in the best interests of children, the perspectives of children were rarely sought. Over time, a greater focus on family engagement emerged, whereby child welfare systems seek to include children and parents as participants in the process. Despite the embrace of this engagement ideology, the perspectives of children continue to be underrepresented in the child welfare literature.

Objectives. This paper examines the extent to which children are meaningfully engaged in child welfare assessment and decision-making processes, drawing together the perspectives of case workers and youth in the child welfare system. The authors employ qualitative research methods to explore the ways in which children's input is solicited by child welfare professionals, and the extent to which their input is valued and incorporated in case planning and decision-making. The study responds to gaps in the literature by focusing on the voices and perspectives of youth, and addresses important questions about the inclusion of youth as active participants in the child welfare system.

Methods. Qualitative research was carried out in Florida (USA) among child protective investigators, child welfare case managers, and youth with current child welfare system involvement. A series of focus groups was conducted with child welfare professionals (n = 150) throughout the state, which explored how professionals engage families, including children, in assessment and case planning. To gather children's perspectives, a sample of youth (n = 38) between the ages of 13 and 18 who were currently under child welfare custody was recruited to participate in interviews about their experiences with the child welfare system and services. Focus group and interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using a grounded theory approach to identify emergent themes and concepts from the data.

Results. Expectations are established in state policy for the inclusion of children in child welfare assessments and case planning. Findings suggest, however, that there is variability in how such expectations are implemented into practice, and the extent to which children's input actually informs case decisions. Youth described a range of experiences, from feeling that their perspective was not considered at all or feeling that the impetus fell on them to make their voice heard by professionals, to feeling that the professionals on their case genuinely listened to them and respected their input. For their part, case workers expressed varying perceptions on the inclusion of children in assessment and case planning; some viewed children as a valuable source of information regarding the family dynamics and needs, while others had concerns about whether children were trustworthy or capable of understanding what is in their best interest.

Conclusions. This study contributes to a limited body of research on children's perspectives and experiences of the child welfare system. The findings from this study indicate that children's voices and perspectives are not always considered or prioritized by child welfare systems. While efforts to more actively engage children have arguably increased, in the USA, children are still often marginalized and denied agency or autonomy by the state. These experiences can have a significant impact on the state's ability to meet the needs of children.

Is diversity a disadvantage for children and adolescents´ participation in the processes of the protection system? A systematic review

Ms. Ana B. Domínguez (University of Lleida), Dr. M. Àngels Balsells Bailón (University of Lleida), Dr. Aida Urrea Monclús (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB))

Abstract

*Background:*The participation of children and young people in socio-educational interventions within foster care and reunification processes in the child protection system is an approach that has become increasingly important in last decades. Recently (Staines & Selwyn, 2020), it has been found that a significant proportion of children, who had been separated from their families felt that they had not received sufficient information about this decision. Neither in the rest of the process when they were returned to home. The point for all of this is not only about giving voice, but also about legitimizing and acknowledging it (Mateos et al., 2017). Due to the innovative nature of the meaningful participation approach in practice, it requires the development of systematized programs and methodologies for its implementation, and paying special attention to the most vulnerable people. Different models of participation have been developed. One of the newest is an Ecological Model of The Conditions of Participation in Child Protection Systems with six dimensions: 1) communication level, 2) voices of children and parents, 3) cultures and family circumstances, 4) governance and legislation, 5) training and 6) inter-agency partnership-collaboration (Lacharité et al., 2019). According mostly with that third dimension, cultures and family circumstances, how does the diversity of children and adolescents influence their participation? Is this diversity considered in order to adjust interventions in the protection system to the reality of children and adolescents? Do people from minority groups feel with a higher incidence their voices are not taking into account?

*Method:*A systematic review of the literature has been carried out to check whether diversity, in terms of gender or sexual dissidence, belonging to determinate race or ethnic group, mental health and disability, is a determining factor in the degree of engagement to intervention programs with children and adolescents in the protection system. In order to clarify how diversity affects the participation of children and adolescents in the protection system and whether there are relevant results that point to ways of articulating participation from an integration perspective, the prism model of systematic review was followed (Urrútia & Bonfill, 2010). In order to carry out the search, keywords such as cultural diversity, child welfare, child participation, ethnical minorities, disability, mental health and LGTBIQ+ were entered in the databases of scientific journals such as Web of Science, PubMed, Scoopus and Google Scholar.

*Results:*Data from the systematic review will be presented, as part of the RTI2018-099305-B-C21 Project “Strategies and resources for family engagement in the development of parenting competences during foster care and reunification”. The results suggest that the level of satisfaction, effectiveness and engagement with interventions decreases when they are not adapted in form and content to the different characteristics of the target population.

Conclusions: The need to apply intervention protocols adapted to the child and youth population with circumstances of diversity is confirmed. The reasons why participatory interventions with minority children do not work so well are varied. It is necessary to advance in the research of these lines from a multidisciplinary approach based on the best interests of the child, not only over the paper but also in practice.

Keywords

Child welfare, diversity, participation, inclusion strategies

Is Someone There for You? Social support of children and youth in care and after leaving care - Grandparental Support and Life Satisfaction Among Adolescents in Residential Care

Prof. Shalhevet Attar-Schwartz (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Mrs. Yisca Huri (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

(Prof. Shalhevet Attar-Schwartz-Chair)
Grandparental support among youth in out-of-home settings in general, and among youth in residential care settings (RCSs) in particular, has been largely under-researched. The current study, based on the reports of a random cluster sample of 1,236 adolescents in grades 8 to 12 residing in Israeli educational RCSs for youth from underprivileged backgrounds, examined the contribution of informal grandparental support to the life satisfaction of adolescents in RCSs. The findings showed that the grandparent identified by the adolescent as the closest grandparent (usually the maternal grandmother) was highly involved in the adolescent's life. In line with social capital and family systems theories, we found grandparental support to be positively associated with adolescents' life satisfaction. Adolescents reporting better relationships between their closest grandparent and the parent that is the offspring of that grandparent also reported higher levels of life satisfaction. Finally, we found a significant interaction between grandparental support, parent-grandparent relationship, and adolescent life satisfaction. Specifically, it was found that for youth with better parent-grandparent relationships, the link between grandparental support and adolescent life satisfaction is stronger. The findings enhance our understanding of the importance of familial figures other than parents to the well-being of children and youth in residential care and the circumstances in which these relationships are most beneficial to them. The findings have implications for intervention programs aimed at strengthening the social support systems of children and youth in out-of-home settings in order to enhance their well-being.

Is Someone There for You? Social support of children and youth in care and after leaving care - Supportive relationships in care and young people’s psychological functioning

Dr. Eunice Magalhães (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), CIS-IUL, Lisboa, Portugal), Dr. Sofia Ferreira (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisboa, Portugal), Prof. Maria Manuela Calheiros (CICPSI, Faculdade de Psicologia, Universidade de Lisboa), Prof. Patricio Costa (ICVS/3B’s Associated Laboratory, University of Minho)

Prof. Shalhevet Attar-Schwartz
Psychological functioning is particularly critical in residential care. However, supportive relations may be protective, both in and out of care relationships (e.g., birth family, staff or peers).
In this presentation we will provide a) a literature review which offer an overview about the existent evidence focused on social support in residential care. The literature has showed the important role of social support in young people’s mental health, given that high levels of social support are associated with lower levels of emotional and behavioral problems. Different sources of social support are recognized in the literature, both from family (e.g., mother) and residential care staff. b) insights about the perceived social support from Portuguese samples of young people in residential care, using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Findings revealed that supportive relationships may promote positive outcomes of psychological functioning but also, they may act as a protective factor of psychological problems. c) a set of recommendations for practice and research in this context.
The positive role of professionals to youth’s mental health is particularly relevant to the definition of public policies in the welfare system.

Is Someone There for You? Social support of children and youth in care and after leaving care- Staff Support and Adolescent Adjustment Difficulties: The Moderating Role of Length of Stay in the Residential Care Setting

Dr. Adena Hoffnung Assouline (School of Social Work and Social Welfare The Hebrew University of Jerusalem),
Prof. Shalhevet Attar-Schwartz (School of Social Work and Social Welfare The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Prof. Shalhevet Attar-Schwartz
Residential child care workers are one of the key support providers among youth in care. However, their contribution to the children's well-being is an understudied issue in current literature. The current study examines the contribution of perceived support of staff in residential care settings (RCSs) and adolescent adjustment difficulties, above and beyond father and mother support and other child characteristics. It also examines the moderating role of adolescent length of stay in the current RCS in the link between staff support and adolescent adjustment difficulties. The study includes the reports of a random cluster sample of 1,409 adolescents, in grades 8 to 12, residing in 16 Israeli educational RCSs, designed for youth from underprivileged backgrounds. The findings show a medium to high level of support reported by the adolescents, with a high variance among the adolescents. Among the whole sample, perceived staff support was associated negatively with adolescent adjustment difficulties. A significant interaction was found between length of stay and staff support in predicting adjustment difficulties. Among youth residing for longer periods in the RCS, there is a stronger link between staff support and fewer adjustment difficulties. The findings have implications for residential care policy and practice, especially regarding the need to strengthen the role of child care workers as a social support system for children and youth in residential care.

JAEL – a longitudinal Swiss study of functional outcomes of young adults with a history of residential youth care

Ms. Süheyla Seker (Research Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychiatric University Hospitals, University of Basel), Dr. Cyril Boonmann (Research Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychiatric University Hospitals, University of Basel)

Objective: In Switzerland, approximately 0.5 to 1% of children and adolescents are placed in residential child welfare or juvenile justice institutions. Youths in these institutions show high levels of mental health and psychosocial needs. In the MAZ. (Modellversuch Abklärung und Zielerreichung in stationären Massnahmen; English translation: Swiss study for clarification and goal-attainment in youth welfare and juvenile justice institutions) study, for example, we found that over 80 percent of the juveniles had at least one traumatic experience, and almost three quarter fulfilled the criteria for at least one mental disorder. Moreover, residential child welfare and juvenile justice youths are also at heightened risk for negative adult functional outcomes. Previous quantitative and qualitative studies showed that Care Leavers experienced various challenges during their transition into and during adulthood. However, as studies on functional outcome of young adults with a residential youth care or juvenile justice history are limited, further research, especially longitudinal studies, are needed to better understand the risks, needs and responsivities of this group. The aim of the JAEL ("Jugendhilfeverläufe: Aus Erfahrung lernen"; English: Youth welfare trajectories: learning form experience) study (the follow-up study of the MAZ. study) is, therefore, to prospectively investigate protective and risk factors for positive and negative adult functional outcomes, and retrospectively to examine success factors and pitfalls for residential care. In addition, an E-learning tool is developed to support pedagogical staff in child welfare and juvenile justice institutions in their work with these youngsters.

Method: The currently running nation-wide JAEL study is a follow-up study of the MAZ. study, which was conducted between 2007 and 2012 in Switzerland. Overall, 592 youths from 64 socio-pedagogical institutions spread across all three language areas participated in the MAZ. study. These meanwhile young adults have been re-assessed between 2017 and 2020 with psychometric questionnaires and clinical interviews regarding adult functioning, e.g., (mental) health, offending behavior, financial situation (incl. education and profession), and relationships, in order to prospectively examine protective and risk factors for positive and negative adult functional outcomes. Furthermore, we interviewed all participants about their residential care experience to retrospectively examine success factors and pitfalls for a successful residential care trajectory.

Results: In total, 231 MAZ. participants participated in the JAEL study. First preliminary results regarding adult functional outcome of the sample will be presented at the EUSARF Conference.

Discussion: The results of our MAZ. study indicated significant need for support in various domains among institutionalized youths in Switzerland. The transition to young adulthood is a very sensitive period for health development and other functional outcomes, especially for those with a history of residential youth care and juvenile justice institutions. Our JAEL study is of great importance to examine pathways of cumulating risk factors and to identify factors associated with adult functional outcomes. Implications for the clinical practice as well as for future research (e.g., longitudinal research in high-risk samples) will also be discussed.

Justifying best interest interventions in Norwegian child protection cases on violence in migrant and non-migrant families

Mr. Audun Gabriel Løvlie (University of Bergen), Prof. Marit Skivenes (University of Bergen)

In this in-depth study of 94 written care order decisions in Norwegian child protection cases of family violence, we examine how the child's best interest is justified, and if there are different justifications for migrant and non-migrant families. Our findings show that the child's best interest is largely determined by a pragmatic discourse where the level of risk is high, and intrusive interventions draw on empirical evidence of violence. Additionally, decision-makers assess the parent's ability to change their behaviour and their ability to meet the children's needs in pragmatic and ethical discourses, with parental denial of violence and blaming, leading decision-makers to conclude that the standards necessary to care for the children are not met. The two noticeable differences we find in justifications of migrant versus non-migrant cases are that there is more evidence of severe direct violence in migrant cases and that the child´s opinion is more often mentioned.

Justifying best interests of very young children: messages from an analysis of transcripts of English family court judgements.

Prof. June Thoburn (Emeritus Professor of Social Work, University of East Anglia, Research Affiliate, University of Bergen Centre for Research on Discretion and Paternalism)

English Family Law (principally Children Act 1989 Adoption Act 2002) closely follows the principles of the United Nations Human Rights convention and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with particular emphasis on what has come to be referred to as the wellbeing of the child or the best interests principle as it is laid out in article 3. Child welfare research and practice have increasingly led to the conclusion that integral to these is the right of a child whose safety and wellbeing needs cannot be met by a birth parent, to be provided with family care which provides 'permanence' (sometimes interpreted as leaving care via a legal order and sometimes as experiencing long-term stability whether inside or outside the care system). This presentation, based on a detailed analysis of court judgements, explores how the English courts decide about the best interest and long term wellbeing of infants.

The English legislation states that children (irrespective of age) do not have a right to decide but do have a right to be consulted and for their voice to be heard. A family court judge has discretion to talk with the child. However, this is unusual, even with older children. Usual practice is for the child's wishes and feelings to be reported to the court by a specialist court social worker (Cafcass guardian ad litem), who works collaboratively with the child's solicitor. The guardian must also, on the basis of case records and time spent with the child, parents, carers, Local Authority social worker and any expert witnesses, must make a recommendation about any order that will be in the child's best interest, and whether the care plan proposed by the local authority is likely to contribute to the child's wellbeing, throughout childhood.

Central to this presentation is the question of how the court decides about the best interest and long term well-being of an infant, and whether this includes a consideration of the 'likely' wishes and interests of the baby. The extent of discretion is illustrated by this term 'likely' since the court must also decide not only about the harm a child has suffered but also is 'likely' to suffer, depending on which legal order and care plan is decided on.

The presentation will report on the findings from a textual analysis of transcripts of 65 English family court judgements made in 2015-17 on care applications in cases of new-born children. This is one part of a larger study of decision-making with respect to new-born children taken into care in 8 jurisdictions when there are concerns about child maltreatment (Skivenes et al, 2017; Krutzinna et al 2019). The methodology for gaining access to and analyzing the judgements will be described. The presentation then focuses on whether and how judges evidenced that they had 'heard' the voice of these infants and taken account of their 'likely' wishes when deciding about their 'best interests'. Particular note is taken of the use of words and concepts including 'attachment' 'bonds' 'identity' 'separation' 'loss' 'trauma' 'physical needs' 'comfort' 'continuity' 'stability' 'contact' and any special needs of a particular child.

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Kinship care in Chile: Experiences of children living with their grandparents

Ms. Carolina Gutierrez (University Co)

In Chile, official data show that in 2017, 18,448 children were living in alternative care. From them, 41.4% were part of some type of foster family. However fostering where there is no kinship tie between child and carer is still an uncommon practice in Chile, and the majority of the children in foster care are indeed living with relatives. There is not much official information to understand in depth the fostering system in the country; indeed the last detailed record is from 2013 and shows that 71.9% of all the fostering was carried out in extended families. Despite the importance of these arrangements in Chile, we do not know much about them. There is scarce research in the country to give insights about it; research on kinship care has been mainly developed in Western countries. Moreover, specific research on children's perspectives of kinship care is scarce. On top of not being enough, all the information we have in Chile is about children formally placed in kinship care, and little is known about those children living in informal arrangements. This is why my PhD thesis main aim is to explore the experiences of care of parenting grandparents and their live-in grandchildren, in both formal and informal arrangements in Chile.

In this specific paper, I will focus on the children's experiences, thus I will give some insights about what it is like for children to live in grandparent care. To do that I will present the ongoing analysis of my research's data. First, I will describe the methodology of the study, which involved in-depth qualitative interviews with grandparents and their grandchildren, separately, in two Chilean locations. The sample included 18 families comprising grandparents (N= 20) and grandchildren between 7 and 15 years of age (N=21). To be included in the sample, the children should have been in their grandparents' care for at least six months and the parents should neither be involved in the daily care of the child nor living in the child's home. To facilitate the interviews with children, visual methods and interactive approaches were used; namely the five field map (Samuelson 1995), a timeline, and an introduce-yourself sheet titled 'want to know me?'

Second, I will present some preliminary findings. Globally, in my thesis I will be using the idea of care as an ongoing process proposed by Tronto (1993), to explore the care pathways and the meanings that both actors attach to their living situation. In this paper, I will focus particularly on the findings related to children as care receivers, but also as active agents and caregivers. The main findings emerging from the analysis are related to the positive aspects that children attribute to their life with their grandparents, where they are being cared for and feel happy. The children feel thankful to the GPs and take care of them too. However, they also show their concerns about the future and feel anxious about the GPs' health. The children also express conflicting relations with the parents, particularly with the mother, wishing that they could spend more time with them. The majority of the children seem to be in a dilemma, where they face a conflict of loyalty and have to negotiate how to relate to the biological parents and the GPs in a caring way.

It is hoped that the findings of this research will fill a knowledge gap about kinship care in Chile and they may help to inform the practice of professionals working in the child welfare system with the consequent improvement of the services for these families.

Kinship caregivers' experience in the light of their relationships with children, parents and youth protection

Mrs. Amilie Dorval (School of Social Work, Université de Montréal), Dr. Rosita Vargas Diaz (Canada Research Chair in Evaluating Public Actions Related to Young People and Vulnerable Populations (CREVAJ-ENAP)), Dr. Chantal Lavergne (Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté, CIUSSS Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de Montréal), Prof. Poirier Marie-Andree (École de service social, Équipe de recherche sur le placement et l'adoption en protection de la jeunesse,Université de Montréal), Dr. Sonia Hélie (I'Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté)

When children are removed from their family environment, kinship foster care is an increasingly preferred option in Western countries. In Quebec, the amendments made to the Youth Protection Act in 2007 make this type of placement a favored option, since it reduces the risk of relational breakdowns for the child by keeping him with people who are meaningful to him, whether in the extended family environment or his social network. Despite this, knowledge about the reality of kinship foster families in Quebec remains limited.

This presentation focuses on the qualitative results of a study conducted using a mixed design to determine the placement trajectory of children entrusted to a kinship family and to understand the factors that influence the stability of these placements. Twenty kinship caregivers were interviewed to learn more about their interpersonal experiences.

The results show when the child is placed with a kinship caregiver they must assume a new role that concerns their relationship with the child, but also the role they must assume with the other actors involved (biological parents, youth protection worker, etc.). In the beginning and in many cases, the kinship carers committed to taking care of the child as an urgent and ad hoc situation, to prevent him from being placed with strangers. Often the information they received on the duration of the measure when the decision was made was rather vague. For some this commitment was transitory, however, for several, the expected duration of placement made no difference and they were willing to commit to the child regardless of the length of time. Several participants reported a lack of awareness of the legal, administrative and clinical implications of their role as foster parents, as well as a lack of preparation for the placement.

Participants expressed the difficulties that many of the children face related to their life history and the maltreatment they experienced before placement. They also report relationship issues with biological parents particularly because of the difficulty in setting limits on them, to protect the child. Managing parent-child contact (e.g. supervision of contacts) is also considered a demanding and often difficult aspect of their role. In addition to managing visits, in many cases, they must deal with children who may react negatively to visits, or when parents miss visits or arrive late. They recognize the need for support from child protection practitioners in this regard.

Besides, they also report difficulty in obtaining support to address children's difficulties, as well as the challenges of personal, family and socio-economic adjustments. These findings confirm the importance of providing kinship carers and families with appropriate support tailored to the diverse needs of families to help them promote the stability, permanence, and development of children in their care.

Knowledge and Beliefs about Sexuality of Adolescents in Residential Care

Prof. Luiza Nobre-Lima (Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive-behavioral Interventions, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra), Ms. Carla Rodrigues (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra)

Adolescence is a sensitive period for romantic and sexual development no matter where adolescents grow. Although already exists a considerable volume of information in the scientific literature about sexual knowledge and sexual beliefs of individuals experiencing adolescence, less is known about adolescents in out-of-home care. This is surprising, considering that there is some evidence that these adolescents tend to engage more in risk behaviors, including sexual ones, than their peers living with their family. It is also known that adolescents in residential care enter their sexual life before 15 years old (Wilson et al., 2014; Oman et al., 2018) or even before 13 years old (Ahrens et al., 2016).

The aim of this study was to analyze the knowledge adolescents in residential care have about sexuality, and their attitudes and beliefs about sexuality and sexual education, and the relationship between this knowledge and the attitudes and beliefs they endorse concerning sexuality. Sample comprised 58 adolescents from both sexes (50% girls), aged between 13 and 20 years old (M=16,26; SD=1,73), all of them studying (66.7% Basic Education; 31.6% Secondary Education). They are living in the current Residential Home for at least one year (79.1% between 1 and 7 years; 18.9% from 8 to 12 years). The Questionnaire of Knowledge about Sexuality and the Questionnaire of Attitudes and Beliefs about Sexuality and Sexual Education were applied to these adolescents. Data collection started to be presential, but because of the pandemic of SARS-COV-19 and consequent confinement, an online version of the questionnaires had to be applied, always ensuring all ethical procedures and proper conditions to the adolescents fill in the questionnaires. A total of 28 adolescents participated in the online collection of data.

Results showed that 91.4% of the adolescents in residential care were dating or had dated and 56.9% had already had sexual relations, of which 57.6% had started their sexual life between 13 and 16 years old. About their sexual knowledge, they revealed to know more about sexuality and sexual pleasure (SSP) and contraception and safe sex (CSS) and less about pregnancy avoidance (PA) and first sexual relation and sexual worries (FSRSW). Girls are better informed about CSS than boys. Beliefs related to dating violence (BDV) were more endorsed than beliefs associated with gender and contraception (BGC) or to loving relationship (BLR). Boys endorsed BDV more than girls. Correlations between knowledge about sexuality and attitudes and beliefs about sexuality and sexual education indicated that the less adolescents in residential care know about CSS, the more they endorse BGC ($r=-.411$, $p<.01$) and about dating violence ($r=-.324$; $p<.05$). Also, the less they know about SSP the more they support BDV ($r=-.456$, $p<.01$) and about loving relationships ($r=-.335$; $p<.05$).

Among the adolescents in residential care, age of first sexual relationship is earlier than in adolescents living with their family what could mean that these engagements may serve a function of affect regulation, also functioning as reassurance behaviors in face of adverse childhood experiences. Their best knowledge about CSS contradicts what is stated in literature and their worst knowledge about PA may suggest impulsivity about SSP, what makes them devalue their worries about pregnancy. The stronger endorsement of BDV corroborates data that indicate that adolescents in residential care report violent attitudes and both physical and psychological aggressions from their romantic partner. The relations found between adolescents' knowledge about sexuality and attitudes and beliefs about sexuality and sexual education reinforce the need to consider sexuality and sexual education a crucial and wide domain to be careful and extensively worked in the context of residential care.

Keywords: sexuality, sexual education, knowledge, beliefs, adolescents, residential care

Knowledge from Children in the Child Protection and Child Welfare Education

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This paper will focus on ethical challenges, and how knowledge from children are understood, valued and applied in the child protection and welfare education.

The aim of the child protection and child welfare education is to qualify professional practitioners who can identify needs and provide the right help at the right time to children, young people and their families in vulnerable life situations.

The National guidelines for child protection and child welfare education (RETHOS 2019) shall ensure a national equivalent academic level regardless of place of study. They apply to all accredited child welfare education by the Universities and Colleges. The revised guidelines of 2019 states that the core competence in the education is related to child welfare research and practice-based knowledge, as well as *knowledge from children*, youth and their parents. The fact that the education is related to *knowledge from children*is new, and reflects the growing view of children as competent actors with their own point of views and rights. It states that knowledge from children is crucial for professional practitioners to provide help.

“My Life Education” is an action research project, financed by The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, that aims to implement children’s voices in child protection and child welfare education in Norway. Collaborators in the project are The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, The University of the South-Eastern Norway and The Change Factory. The Change Factory is a nonprofit foundation financed through government funding, scholarships and donations from foundations and non-profit organizations, consisting of young people with experience from the welfare system. The aim is to get young people to identify system-changing ideas, build consensus around them, and open direct communication between service users and implementing agencies to create real change. The idea is to listen to what (young) people in welfare systems think about what is good help, and what should change for the help to feel good and actually work.The young people are experts (Pro’s), gathering and amplifying their knowledge to finally reach influential adults. Children are empowered to act as lobbyists that push for the shifts they suggest. The ultimate goal is to teach public institutions a proven way to listen to children in a respectful way.
Through the project “My Life Education” educates and the Change Factory cooperate in developing and exploring different pedagogical methods that provides the students with knowledge from children. The experts from the Change Factory share experiences and knowledge with students in seminars, discussions and they participate in the students’ communication training.
Another aim of the project is to open up this opportunity for collaboration with the experts in the Change Factory for all the universities in Norway. This goal seems to be hard to reach, and it seems to be quite a bit of resistance in the different professional circles. This has opened up for several questions. How does the different universities and educates understand the new national guidelines? How do they view children? What experiences, practices or plans do they have in providing the students with knowledge from children? These questions are the basis for a qualitative study conducted in 2020, where teaching staff in child protection

and child welfare education in Norway are interviewed. Their answers provides knowledge of obstacles and possibilities for the voice of the child in the child welfare education.

Knowledge Transfer in Leaving Care – The Hub Function of Competence Centre Leaving Care

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*The contribution is connected to the topic "**transition to adulthood**" as well as to the approach "**knowledge transfer** into practice, social work education and training".*

The **Competence Centre Leaving Care (CCLC)**is a national non profit organization in Switzerland and exists since 2019. The CCLC is an initiative of the associations CURAVIVA, INTEGRAS and PACH and is funded by the DROSOS foundation. It is committed to facilitating **equal opportunities for Care Leavers** throughout Switzerland. To this end, the CCLC is active in various fields, such as knowledge management, advocacy, advice and support, and training and education. These activities relate to diverse target groups on three levels: The public and politics (macro level), institutions and authorities (meso level) as well as professionals and Care Leavers (micro level).

With this contribution, we aim to demonstrate the CCLC's practices and challenges in knowledge transfer on the topic of leaving care. With its activities on different levels, the CCLC relates different types of knowledge to each other. That is, it is not only about the transfer of knowledge into practice, but also into research and politics. The CCLC cultivates and promotes a **differentiated approach to knowledge** and maintains **tightly knit networks** with relevant actors in order to advance innovative developments and sustainable solutions in the field of Leaving Care.

We will highlight different aspects of knowledge transfer. Based on theses and concrete examples, we will demonstrate **different approaches and solutionsof the CCLC in terms of knowledge transfer**. The aim is to show how diverse and differentiated the solutions have to be to achieve desired outcomes at different levels to ultimately improve the situation of Care Leavers in the long term.

More precisely, we will discuss the following **theses**:

- In order to achieve the goal of "improving equal opportunities for care leavers in Switzerland", various **intertwined activities** (as mentioned above) for and with **diverse target groups** are necessary.
- In order for knowledge from research to become effective in practice and to actually be applicable, it is necessary to relate it to other **types of knowledge**: knowledge from practice (challenges, best practice, experience), knowledge about the contextual conditions (legal and structural framework), and knowledge from the care leavers themselves.
- In terms of public relation work, it is important to provide **knowledge from different perspectives**: From the perspective of Care Leavers, from the perspective of research and from the perspective of practice.

In conclusion, we argue that different types of knowledge have to be related to each other in order in a productive way to solve complex societal problems. In the field of Leaving Care, the CCLC in Switzerland has an important **hub function** with regard to the relation of knowledge.

Landscapes of internalization and technologies of the self in institutionalized children and young people (1979-2000)

Dr. Patricia Castillo (MIDAP), Mrs. Alejandra Gonzalez (Academia de humanismo Cristiano)

Contact for collective session for the joint propossal- **Manuela Garcia-Quiroga**- **Child and youth participation in residential care and adoption**-Landscapes of internalization and technologies of the self in institutionalized children and young people (1979-2000).

In this presentation, preliminary results of a study will be presented, in which the places and experiences that form part of the childhood memory from children that lived their childhood at children homes, for special protection between 1979 and 2000, will be re-built. This study addresses the institutionalized childhood experience from the perspective of new childhood studies that consider childhood as a social historical play roll, fulfilling the main part in the reconstruction of its own subjectivity, therefore inescapable as a witness when evaluating and building history about institutions. Gender differences and care practices are the elements described, which enabled or disabled in each case, in the same way as the distinction of topes and polytopes, that set the landscapes of interiorization. From which girls boys and younglings, that remember their experiences built practices and senses of themselves.

Leaving Care - Biographical Lessons

Prof. Maren Zeller (OST Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences)

International research studies have shown that outcomes for children leaving care are poor in comparison to those of their peers. Therefore, care leavers are often constructed as a highly vulnerable group. Biographical research has the advantage of considering the individual life story from the perspective of the subject and combining it with the experience of adverse societal circumstances. An individual is seen not only as an actor in his/her social world, but also as an *agent*who is characterized by having the opportunity to act – within the given structural circumstances –, to reflect on actions, and to change his/her biographical pathway and thereby his/her social environment. In the last two decades, biographical research on care leavers has significantly increased and has been linked to different theoretical concepts, such as the life course, biography, resilience, social support, agency and networks. Still, the "roles of agency and structure" in the leaving care process need further exploration.

The symposium will focus on two main aspects: in addition to examining recent results from biographical research on care leavers, we will discuss various theoretical concepts that frame biographical research in order to shed more light on the question of how leaving care and agency are connected. This relational perspective will also allow us to discuss how to develop and further improve (aftercare) services. The symposium combines four contributions which clarify how agency can be "captured" within biographical narratives and presents the relationship between the individual the care arrangements, and the legal and policy framework.

Contributors are:
Elisabeth Backe-Hansen, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway
Ute Karl, Marei Lunz, Ulla Peters, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg and Germany
Joyce Hlungwani, University of Johannesburg, South Africa
Miriam Meuth, University of Applied Sciences St. Gallen, Switzerland

Leaving Care – Biographical Lessons - Relational Agency in transition(s) – a qualitative longitudinal approach to processes of leaving care

Prof. Ute Karl (Protestant University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg), Prof. Ulla Peters (University of Luxembourg), Dr. Marei Lunz (University of Luxembourg)

Within the Project "Young People's Transitions out of Residential and Foster Care (2015-2018, Luxembourg) we developed a relational approach of agency (based on the concept of Emirbayer & Mische 1998/2016) that understands agency within social relations and constellations which change over time. In regard to young people leaving care the transition is thus seen as a process of change in which not only the young person 'is in transition' but the whole constellation undergoes major changes.

In our paper we will focus on a case study. This case study is based on three qualitative interviews with one young man who is leaving residential care to assisted living. The first interview with him took place shortly before leaving residential care, the second shortly after having moved to his own flat in an assisted living and the third several months later.

Through these three interviews we get insights how the constellations change during the process of moving out and going on, and which relationships, practices, and support foster or hinder agency and self-efficacy. We have chosen this case from our sample, because it shows how a young man loses more and more control over his life circumstances after having left residential care although he is trying to do the best within a more and more difficult constellation. This case shows in a very pointed way the interdependency of different institutional actors and contexts, and the missing links between them (residential care, school, assisted living, psychological treatment, family) which leads to a paralyse within the constellation. It further elicits how supportive and trustful relationships with professionals are interrupted when moving out of the residential care setting to a more independent form of living.

In Luxembourg, young people without special needs (psychiatric attestation, own children etc.) have no right for a minimum income when they are under the age of 25. Against this backdrop, it becomes further evident how a constellation might demand the acceptance of specific categorizations of a young person in order to not lose housing. Such categorizations, however, can be ambivalent with regard to the whole constellation in which they might foster or hinder agency.

The aim of our paper is threefold:

1. Methodology: We will show how a qualitative short-time longitudinal case study can shed light on the changing constellations within transitions into adulthood, and how agency can be analysed from a relational perspective within these constellations.
2. We will further identify aspects to improve services and forms of accompanying young people shortly before, during, and after moving out of residential care settings.
3. We will further sketch the need for a relational professionality which implies political engagement.

This paper is foreseen for the:
Invited Symposium: "Leaving Care – Biographical Lessons" (Prof. Dr. Maren Zeller)

Literature

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Leaving Care – Biographical Lessons – 'Placement' in residential care under a perspective of Care Leavers agency.

Ms. Miriam Meuth (Institute of Education, University of Zurich)

The term 'placement' has diverse meanings and is used differently in various fields. Within the context of residential care, the notion 'placement' implies that children or young people live in an institutional home. Previous research on residential care highlighted the agency of Care Leavers in such institutional homes. However, perspectives on 'placed' persons, which implicate an administrative and formal attitude driven by an organisational logic, are still widespread. Against the background of residential care studies in Switzerland and Germany I discuss the following questions in this presentation: why is this expression frequently used? What does it stand for and which implications does it have? Which role do children and young people and their agency play within this light? Following this, I look at these issues from a different theoretical angle, namely through the notion of *dwelling*: What difference would it make if we approach care leavers not as (formally) placed young people, but as actors and producents of their home-spaces?

Leaving Care-Biographical Lessons-The Contribution of Agency in facilitating Successful Transitions out of Residential Care among South African Young Women

Ms. Joyce Hlungwani (University of Johannesburg)

The challenges associated with transitioning out of care are widely acknowledged in care-leaving literature. There is also increased attention in the area of after-care support, which is generally considered crucial in facilitating more successful transitions for young people leaving care. The availability of such transitional support services, however, depends largely on where one is situated in the world. While the global North tends to emphasize the role of structural interventions in facilitating a more successful transitioning process, there are contexts such as South Africa, where access to structural support systems is very limited. Poverty and youth unemployment in South Africa continue to be on the rise with young women being most affected. Young women leaving care are potentially most vulnerable to poor outcomes in the face of contextual challenges. This necessitates research that is focused on finding out what happens to young women after leaving care. However, care leaving research in South Africa has rarely focused on the transitioning experiences of young women from care to adulthood.

While structure is without doubt very important in determining access to resources during the transition out of care, it is also important to note that in some contexts such as South Africa, agency plays an equally crucial role in facilitating successful transitioning. That is, even in the face of limited access to structural transitional support, the young people are active agents who engage meaningfully with their environment to identify threats and opportunities to shape their transitional path. This paper argues that the manifestation of resilience during the transition out of care is a result of the relationship between individuals and their social environment. The paper presents findings from a study with South African young women, who despite being faced with contextual difficulties, demonstrate agency and capitalize on social relationships to redirect their narrative. Findings suggest that both agency and social environment play an important role in facilitating successful transitions out of care.

Leaving foster care in Germany - Social support for care leavers in their transition to adulthood from their point of view

Dr. Carolin Ehlke (University of Hildesheim)

In Germany, nearly 90.000 young people live in foster care. Nevertheless, too little is known about the lives of these young people, especially care leavers and their experiences in their transition from care into adulthood. So far, more research is done on the group of young people who lived in residential care. Additionally, the perspective of the care leavers themselves often is missing in research studies.

Although a legal basis for support until the age of 21, in exceptional cases until 27, exists many young people face the challenge to leave out-of-home care when they become 18. Regarding foster care, the German child and youth welfare frequently relies on the voluntary commitment of foster parents to provide further support when public care is finished.

Because of these aspects, the presentation will focus on the social support for care leavers from different persons while transitioning out-of-home care (foster families, families of origin, friends and boy friends, social workers and supervisors from vocational trainings and work). Concerning this matter, main results from the speakers‘ PhD thesis will be presented. Within the PhD seven care leavers aged between 18 and 24 were interviewed regarding their experiences in coping with the transition to adulthood. For analyzing the data the speaker used the German socio-pedagogical concept “Lebensbewältigung” (Böhnisch 2018) as a heuristically frame. Among other things, one main focus in the concept is the social environment of people who cope with different things in their lives.

The results of the speakers’ PhD reveal that support is dependent on the experienced belongings of the young people to the different persons while living in care and after leaving care. Within the explanations of the interviewed care leavers, different family ideas and concepts become visible. Depending on the respective concept of ‘being a family’, the interviewed persons describe various experiences in their transition and the possibilities to participate in decisions regarding their process of leaving care.

Lessons to be learned from adolescents' responses to parents' expectations regarding the wellbeing of their relationship

Dr. Isabella (Issie) Jacobs (North-West University), Prof. Mariette Van der Merwe (North), Prof. Alida Herbst (North-)

Background

The parent-adolescent relationship is probably the most researched relationship of all the relationships found in the family life cycle. An explanation for this is possibly because adolescence, as a developmental stage, undergoes major changes and adjustments for the individual transitioning to adulthood. These changes directly influence the individual's systems and relationships and are often the source of conflict and misunderstandings between the participants in the dyad. These conflicts and misunderstandings frequently result in highly strung relationships. In replying to a gap in research regarding taking reciprocal responsibility for the wellbeing of the parent-adolescent relationship, this presentation will focus on lessons that could be learned from adolescents' responses on parents' expectations regarding the wellbeing of the parent-adolescent relationship.

Objective and method

The objective with this presentation is to report on adolescents' responses to their parents' expectations regarding the wellbeing of their relationship. A further objective is to reflect on lessons that could be learned from these responses and to make recommendations for professionals working in the field of the parent-adolescent relationship.

Twenty-five adolescents and 25 parents were purposively selected to firstly participate in semi-structured interviews during which they shared their perspectives on taking reciprocal responsibility for the wellbeing of the parent-adolescent relationship. Adolescents and parents were also involved in group sessions during which the Intergenerational Group Reflective Technique (IGRT) was employed to collect the data. During the IGRT parents and adolescents had the opportunity to, in the presence of each other, not only share their views on what they expect from the other to contribute to the wellbeing of the parent-adolescent relationship, but to also, in the presence of each other, respond to these expectations.

Results

In their responses to the expectations of their parents, adolescents mainly felt that parents do not understand their developmental phase. As a result of this adolescents are of the opinion that:

- Parents do not realise or understand the important role that friends play in their lives;
- Parents underestimate the extent of peer group pressure;
- Parents do not understand the place of social media in their lives;
- Parents underestimate their abilities or their knowledge to know right from wrong;
- Parents do not understand why adolescents choose not to disclose certain matters happening in their lives.

The outcome to collectively involve the adolescents and the parents in the IGRT was that both parties in the dyad had the opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions in the presence of the other. A further valuable outcome of employing the IGRT was that both parties had to listen to what the other had to say and had the opportunity to respond to the thoughts and opinions of the other.

Conclusion

From the adolescents' responses it seems as if parents are not knowledgeable and therefore do not understand adolescence as a developmental stage. The responses of the adolescents further gave the impression that parents at times might be parenting their adolescent child according to certain assumptions around adolescence as a developmental stage, and as result probably contribute to the misunderstandings and tension that this relationship is known for. Parents therefore need to familiarise themselves with and become knowledgeable about the adolescent developmental stage in order to address the wellbeing of the parent-adolescent relationship.

Life Story Work: promoting emotional well-being

Mr. Murray Davies (The Viewpoint Organisation Ltd)

Objectives

To share information demonstrating how life story practice supports the development of a positive personal identity and is associated with higher self-esteem and emotional well-being.

To share information demonstrating how undertaking life story work helps to establish open and honest conversations between practitioners and young people and build relationships.

To share information about the life story process, enabling young people to express feelings about life experiences, unraveling confusion and discarding some of the negative emotional baggage which a child may have carried.

To demonstrate how digital technology supports the process of undertaking life story work, recording this in a creative way and ensuring the 'life story' record is available to a young person wherever they move.

Method

Sharing information demonstrating how losing track of the past can make it difficult for young people to develop emotionally and socially. Life story practice supports the development of a positive personal identity and sense of personal history helping the young person to develop and build resilience, a positive sense of self and improved self-esteem and emotional well-being.

To share information demonstrating how undertaking life story work helps to establish open and honest conversations between practitioners and young people and build relationships. Life story work is an integral part of working with young person in care. Helping the young people reflect on their life experiences and express feelings, helps unravel confusion associated with their past and establishes a personal connection allowing the young person to see their worker as someone who hears, values and understands their needs

Sharing information about the life story process. Life story work should always start with trying to establish what the young person knows and understands. Some young people will have a clear view of what has happened to them but may not know why. Others will be very confused. The purpose of life story work is to help young people reflect on and express feelings about life experiences, unravel confusion associated with their past and develop more accurate understanding. A child who does not fully understand their history is at risk of developing an imagined story of fictional family members leading to a misplaced sense of identity.

Sharing examples of digital technology supporting the process of undertaking life story work. Providing easy access to key information, achievements, key people, places and events together with associated narrative.

Results

Participants will be aware of the links between life story work and young people's emotional well-being and increased self-esteem. Participants will also understand how life story work supports relationship-based practice.

Participants will also have had an opportunity to consider practice in undertaking life story work, expressing feelings about life experiences and unraveling confusion associated with their past.

Participants will have considered the value of digital technologies in supporting the process and ensuring the 'life story' record is available to a young person wherever they move.

Conclusion

The benefits of undertaking life story work with young people in care will have been demonstrated, and the way digital technology can support relationship-based practice.

Linking child and youth services with adult psychiatry: Insights from an on-site consultation offer for mentally ill parents.

Mr. René Meyer (Children and Youth Welfare Centre Horgen/Zurich), Mr. Harald Müller (Private Clinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy Sanatorium Kilchberg), Ms. Julia Quehenberger (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family), Ms. Silvia Gavez (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family), Ms. Aline Tiefenauer (Children and Youth Welfare Centre Horgen/Zurich), Ms. Beate Stapff (Children and Youth)

Objectives: Children of mentally ill parents often do not receive the support they need. This gap in provision may lead to these children, who are often exposed to multiple problems, developing behavioural problems themselves in future (van Santvoort et al., 2015). In order to bring the child to the foreground of the "care network," a Child and Youth Welfare Services Centre and a Private Psychiatric Clinic, both located in the Swiss canton of Zurich, jointly launched a low-threshold on-site consultation service, called "SanaChild". SanaChild is intended for outpatients and inpatients in psychiatric treatment who have children aged 0-18 years. The aim of SanaChild is to inform parents in an easy and accessible way about possible support services offered by the Child and Youth Welfare Services Centre and to establish measures of assistance if necessary. In general, the project is based on the idea building on the ability of the parents to implement offers of help on their own responsibility. Depending on the individual need for advice, information on youth and family support is provided (support in early parenthood, parenting advice, alimony support, social insurance, outpatient and inpatient services). Psychiatric staff at the clinic (social workers, psychologists, doctors, and nurses) are also advised on these support options.

Method: During the project phase from summer 2019 to autumn 2020, consultations were held on Wednesday afternoons by two social workers alternately in a psychiatric clinic in the canton of Zurich. The project was evaluated including documentation of consultations (eg. duration, reasons for consultation, contents of consultation, type of assistance offered) and group interviews with the consulting social workers and psychiatric staff at the clinic. The results of the pilot phase should provide information on the benefits and contents of the consultation service and help to decide whether and, if so, how it should be continued.

Results: Consultations were used regularly. On-site consultations offered by the Child and Youth Welfare Service Centre succeeded in providing assistance tailored to the individual needs of parents. Final findings related to the usage and contents of the consultations as well as practical insights gained from the group interviews will be presented.

Conclusion: Due to the regular use, SanaChild could be established in the clinic in the long term. Insights from practical experience and findings of the evaluation indicate that "Sana Child" successfully bridges the interface between adult psychiatry and child and youth Services.

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Listening to children in foster care and residential care: an international perspective

Prof. Poirier Marie-Andree (Université)

The use of placement and adoption occupies an important place on the continuum of services offered to young people and families in difficulty.The effectiveness of a placement measure is generally evaluated by objective indicators such as the duration of the placement, the number of moves, or reunification with biological family. While these measures are valuable, it should be noted that the primary objective of placement should be to improve the living conditions and well-being of young people who are separated from their families (Poirier et al., 2015). To achieve this, it is essential to listen more to young people in care in order to better understand what influences their well-being and their developmental trajectories. However, few studies have examined the perceptions of children in family foster care, and even fewer have examined the perceptions of children in residential care (Lausten & Frederiksen, 2016). The objective of this symposium is to present the results of research work that has focused on the experience and voices of children placed in family foster care and residential care. It will bring together researchers from three countries (Canada, France, Spain) in order to draw parallels between different realities and thus develop a richer understanding of the experience of children in care and the adults in their environment. The symposium will take place in two parts. The first will present the results of three research studies that looked at what children have to say in evaluating the quality of their foster environment, their relationships with the adults around them, and their school experience. Subsequently, since the well-being of children in care is strongly associated with the ability of the adults in their environment to listen to them, foster their participation and make decisions in their best interests, two presentations will address the challenges that adults face when considering the perspective of the child in care. As a researcher, how do we involve the child in care when doing research on him or her? As a foster parent, how can we ensure that the welfare of the child in care remains at the centre of attention when ethically difficult situations arise on a daily basis? This symposium provides an opportunity to hear the views of children, but also to reflect on the challenges of truly listening to them and taking into account their well-being.

Contributions:

Well-being at school: what do foster children think about it? Séverine Euillet, France.

Living in a house and in someone’s heart: Perceptions of children in residential care on their feeling of being loved. Carole Côté, Canada.

The experience of foster placement in the family reunification process: children’s perspectives on their care environment. Doris Chateauneuf, Canada.

Lessons learned about the participation of children in family and residential care in research processes. Eduard Vaquero Tió, Spain.

Ethically difficult situations in the role of a foster parent: how to ensure the child remains the centre of attention? Marie-Pierre Joly, Canada.

Listening to children in foster care and residential care: an international perspective - Ethically difficult situations in the role of a foster parent: how to ensure the child remains the centre of attention?

Ms. Marie-Pierre Joly (School of Social Work, Université de Montréal), Prof. Poirier Marie-Andree (School of Social Work, Université de Montréal), Prof. Annie Pullen-Sansfaçon (School of Social Work, Université de Montréal)

Name of the collective paper session: Listening to children in foster care and residential care: an international perspective
Chair Person: Prof. Marie-Andrée Poirier

CONTEXT: In recent decades, a movement towards greater professionalization of foster care has taken shape in several countries. In Quebec (CANADA), this movement began in 2009 with the adoption of the Act Respecting the Representation of Family-type Resources (ARR). This law gives Quebec foster parents worker status and regulates their right to unionize. Since the emergence of this movement, the issue of the dual role of foster parents, who are both parents and professionals, has been the subject of growing concern. These individuals may experience a conflict between the two roles: What attitude to adopt with the child? How long should the placement be maintained when the foster parent's biological children are in distress as a result of the placement? Should a child in care who already has a mother call the caregiver "mother"? These conflicts are not to be taken lightly as they can lead to dissatisfaction on the part of the foster parent, a questioning of the foster parent's commitment, and ultimately threaten the stability of the child in care.

OBJECTIVES: This presentation is based on a doctoral approach that aims to provide a new understanding of the conflicts associated with the role and identity of the foster parent through the field of critical ethics. Indeed, these conflicts can be understood as ethical dilemmas, as they generate decisions to be taken on a daily basis, which have an impact on several people, first and foremost on the child in care. The objectives of the thesis are 1) to identify the ethically difficult situations (Banks, 2005) faced by foster parents and 2) to better understand how foster parents deal with these situations, and thus their ethical reasoning.

METHOD: A thematic content analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) was conducted based on material collected from semi-structured one-on-one interviews with 20 foster parents.

RESULTS: Preliminary results will be presented in relation to the two research objectives. Particular attention will be paid to the importance foster parents place on the child's well-being and the impact of their decisions on the child.

CONCLUSION: This presentation offers an original look at the identity and role conflicts that foster parents may experience. Based on this new understanding, recommendations will be made regarding the support foster parents need to cope with the complexity of their role as smoothly as possible, while taking into account the well-being of the children in care.

Listening to children in foster care and residential care: an international perspective - Lessons learned about the participation of children in family and residential care in research processes

Dr. Eduard Vaquero Tió (University of Lleida), Dr. Ainoa Mateos (University of Barcelona), Dr. Aida Urrea Monclús (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)), Dr. Belen Parra Ramajo (University of Barcelona)

Session chair: Marie-Andrée Poirier.

Can children improve the processes of family and residential care from research? Accordingto Rights Child Convention (ONU, 1989), boys and girls have the right to participate in all those processes that affect them. The importance of giving voice and listening to children in all areas of their development has been increasingly recognized. However, in some situations, this participation has been limited, especially in contexts such as the child protection system or in contexts where it is in a situation of risk or vulnerability (Dixon, Ward, & Blower, 2019; Goodyer, 2014).

This gap is also present in some research processes (Dillon, 2018; Dillon, Greenop, & Hills, 2016). Children involved in family and residential care processes have not only the right, but also the ability to provide solutions through research processes that improve these protection measures (Balsells, Fuentes-Peláez & Pastor, 2017). It seems that one of the challenges of research in this field has to do with overcoming the limitation behind the "all for childhood without childhood". Therefore, from research it is necessary not only to promote experiences in which the focus of the study is childhood, but also that this is an active agent in the research process. Studies must be by and for them, but fundamentally with them.

The present contribution shows some methodological research strategies used throughout these last years by our research group specialized in studies on interventions in childhood and youth. These strategies include: a) recognizing children as a legitimate and valid informant who provides relevant data in the research processes (Mateos, Vaquero, Balsells, & Ponce, 2017; Pastor, Balsells, Vaquero, Mateo & Ciurana, 2020)., b) using methodological strategies that listen to the voice of the children involved in the foster care processes and residential (Flewitt et al., 2018), c) facilitate verbalization and reflection on the issues investigated (Castro, Ezquerra, & Argos, 2016) and d) diversify children's communication opportunities for a more inclusive participation (Davidson, 2017).

Examples of methodological strategies for collecting data adjusted to the development of the child and its context such as drawing, photography or board games, as well as digital devices, not only place the focus of childhood research on foster care and residential, but contribute to guarantee their right to participate in the research processes on the issues that affect them.

Listening to children in foster care and residential care: an international perspective - Placement Experience in the Family Reunification Process: Children's Perspectives on their Out-of-home Care

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Paper session Chair: Marie-Andrée Poirier

In Quebec, child protection services are governed by the Youth Protection Act. This Act states, among other things, that all decisions must seek to maintain the child in his or her family of origin. Thus, much effort and many services must be expended to avoid the child's displacement or to work on the return home in the event of placement. In this regard, family reunification is, in Quebec, the permanency option most often favoured following placement, regardless of the child's age (Drapeau, Hélie & Turcotte, 2015). On the other hand, it has also been observed in several studies that a non-negligible proportion of reunified children re-entry into the foster care system and that re-entry rates following family reunification tend to increase over time (Shaw, 2006; Wells & Correira, 2012; Wulczyn, 2004).

In order to better understand the experience of the actors involved in the process of family reunification and to identify the key elements of the journey of these families, an extensive qualitative study has been carried out (Drapeau, Chateauneuf, Saint-Jacques & Noel, 2020). This study examines 47 family reunification cases in 4 regions of the province of Quebec; 28 cases in which family reunification was completed and maintained (Group A) and 19 cases in which family reunification resulted in a re-entry into foster care system (Group B). In each of these cases, children over nine years of age, parents and the child welfare worker assigned to follow up on the child were invited to participate in an individual interview. A total of 101 interviews were conducted, 23 of which were with youth (11 youth from Group A and 12 youth from Group B). The youths were questioned on various topics, including the composition of their social network, their representation of the family, their journey and displacement between their family environment of origin and their placement environment(s), their sense of stability and their level of satisfaction with the various stages of the family reunification process.

The aim of this paper is to set out the youths' (n=23) views on the foster environments in which they were placed before returning to their families of origin and, for some (Group B), in which they found themselves following the failure of family reunification. These placement settings mainly involve foster families and residential care, but also include, in some cases, group homes. Analysis of the data enables us to group into three main categories the different perceptions of the youths with respect to the care environments that took them in and to target the elements that influenced their appreciation of these environments: 1) the nature and quality of the relationships with caregivers (foster parents, residential child care workers) or with peers in the host environment; 2) issues related to supervision, discipline and autonomy; and 3) the perceived effects and impacts of the care environment on the experience or on the development of specific skills. These three dimensions bring together the main criteria and factors identified by the youths to qualify their placement experience in their family reunification process.

Listening to children in foster care and residential care: an international perspective - Well-being at school: what foster children think about it ?

Dr. Euillet Séverine (Université Paris Nanterre)

Session chair: Marie-Andrée Poirier

Schooling plays a major role in a child's life in terms of time spent in school and academic achievement. In the context of child protection, schooling is a sphere highly valued in terms of schooling (grade repetition, deschooling, absenteeism, adapted schooling). The finding that children in care have below-average school performance is widely shared (Dénécheau, 2011). Beyond these objective indicators, studies have investigated the academic dimension as a part of the child's and/or the student's well-being (Suldo, Riley & Shaffer, 2006), confirming that the school experience plays a significant role in a child's own representation of well-being. With regard to children in care, the issue of well-being in school is all the more crucial as these children may be stigmatized or marginalized by other children or teachers. Along with other works meant to represent the point of view of children in care, this research seeks to identify and analyse the subjective school well-being of children in foster care.

We conducted a research in the field of sciences of education which collected the point of view of foster children on their well-being. Using the French version of Multidimensional Students ' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, Zullig and Runa, 2012), life satisfaction of children in foster care was evaluated in a multidimensional way: family, school, self, friends, the living environment. 41 girls and 50 boys, with an average age of 13,5 years (SD: 2,6), who have been in foster care for 5,25 years (SD: 4,08) participated in this research.

We noticed that the school dimension has the lowest satisfaction. The low level of well-being at school experienced by children in foster care who were questioned in this research study can also be associated with any prospective change of foster family (or other care setting), which often leads to a change of school. Literature shows the harmful effects of school changes (Fawley-King et al., 2017), in particular with regard to loss of previous gains (Zetlin, Weinberg & Luderer, 2004), stress and anxiety (Finkelstein, Wamsley & Miranda, 2002). These results provide subjective and qualitative elements for thinking about institutional and professional practices. The child protection system in France is changing with regard to the place to be given to children's schooling as a socio-educational lever and no longer as a place for the symptomatic expression of their difficulties. This is why the voice of children on this subject is crucial to consider, with a view to developing their participation, their empowerment in their living context.

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Listening to children in foster care and residential care: an international perspective-Living in a house and in someone’s heart: Perceptions of children in residential care on their feeling of being loved.

Mrs. Carole Côté (Université du Québec en Outaouais), Dr. Marie-Ève Clément (Université du Québec en Outaouais)

Session chair: Marie-Andrée Poirier.

According to White (2016), it is difficult to express the immense complexity of human experience without making room for love. Children living in residential care (RC) need sensitive adults who respond to their needs and love them enough to develop the capacity to love themselves and each other. They need to know that where they live is a space where they can feel at home and let their guard down because they are safe with caring adults. However, residential care seem to focus more on meeting basic needs and codes and procedures, perhaps at the expense of meeting the emotional needs of children (Sutherland, 2006).

Protection services need to consistently assess not only the quality of their services, but also how they are perceived by young people. Some quantitative studies have looked at the satisfaction of children placed in the care of child protection. They found that the level of satisfaction of children in residential care is significantly lower than that of children in family foster care (Lausten & Frederiksen, 2016).

Children are key sources of information for describing their experiences. They should be consulted on issues that concern them and affect their well-being (Christensen & James, 2008). The institutions developed to care for children have been designed on the basis of adult priorities; taking into account the views of the children living there must be a priority.

Objectives: The main objective of the research is to better understand the experience of children aged 6 to 14 years who are placed in RC by looking at their feelings of being loved by those who care for them on a daily basis.

More specifically, the discussions with the children provided an opportunity to explore:

- their representations of where they live and the role of the adults who work there;
- their sense of having a meaningful relationship with one or more caregivers (residential child care workers);
- their perceptions of what love is;
- the actions taken by caregivers that make them feel loved, safe and supported.

Method: Exploratory qualitative research was conducted. Semi-directed individual interviews were conducted with 20 children placed in RCs. A thematic analysis of the interviews was conducted based on the theoretical framework of attachment.

Results: Our study found, from the perspective of children in care, that the RC does not always allow them to develop a meaningful emotional connection with a caregiver and a sense of belonging. Some children do not identify the residence as their home environment despite the fact that they have often lived there for more than a year. Some describe having given up developing emotional ties with adults in order to stop experiencing hurtful separations. On the other hand, it appears that some children feel safe and invest emotionally in the placement setting.

Conclusions: Some avenues for establishing a more reassuring relationship between the child placed in RC and the caregivers will be proposed. The child must be able to feel at home in an environment that fosters the stability of a place and people. Responding to emotional needs must be a priority. The training of professionals must address the importance of love and healthy closeness rather than insisting on therapeutic distance.

Listening to children’s voices of their participation within the context of child protection assessment

Prof. Karmen Toros (Tallinn University)

Although participatory approaches have gained considerable popularity in discussions regarding child protection internationally, it remains a complex area of practice — research indicates that children’s voices are only partially visible during assessment and decision-making. Nevertheless, previous research suggests that children in child protection system want to be more heard and understood, with their opinions being taken into account. In order to identify the child’s needs and to act in the child’s best interests, the child’s views of the situation and his/her opinions and wishes are crucial. It is believed that children are given a central position, not as objects for decisions but as subjects and experts in relation to knowledge of their lives, including needs and therefore, children needing to be acknowledged and treated as experts on matters involving their lives. It stresses that children are competent social actors with valuable views on their daily life. Furthermore, literature in the field of child protection highlights the importance of the participation of children in terms of the beneficial outcomes of the intervention-related decisions, impacting their lives. Children are considered to play a crucial role in the planning and delivery of services. However, practitioners tend to underestimate children’s capacity to participate and make meaning of their needs.

This presentation reports the findings of a qualitative study of children’s experiences of and perspectives on their participation in the context of child protection assessment in Estonia. Preliminary results indicate that children’s experiences and memories from the first contact with the child protection worker varied extensively. Some of the children had no experience with talking to a child protection worker, meaning their voices were not expressed, heard, and considered in the decision-making process. Communication was lacking the dialogue, and no deep conversations about the family-life, interventions, children’s needs, wishes, and hopes were reported. Children described brief interactions, not meaningful discussions that could be considered consistent with child-centred practice. A lack of communication tended to be part of younger children’s experiences.

Longer-term contributions of formal and informal supports - Exploring support for care-experienced students in UK higher education using the ‘capabilities approach’

Dr. Neil Harrison (University of Oxford), Dr. Zoe Baker (Applied Inspiration), Dr. Katie Ellis (university of sheffield), Prof. Jacqueline Stevenson (University of Leeds)

The presence of care-experienced students in UK higher education has been of academic and policy interest for over fifteen years. There has been growing concern in the last three years, with a series of studies focusing on their experiences and the support they receive, including from England (Ellis and Johnston, 2019; Harrison, 2017; Stevenson et al., 2020), Scotland (O’Neill et al., 2019) and, imminently, Wales. This paper will draw together the key findings from these reports and situate them within a broader theoretical context.

Care-experienced people have a significantly lower-than-average propensity to enter higher education and are more likely to study later in life than average and to make greater use of lower status forms of higher education (Harrison, in press). They are also significantly more likely to leave their studies early, with around one-in-five doing so (Harrison, 2017). Students report a range of interlocking challenges including poor support from their local authority, unmanaged transitions, difficulties securing and maintaining accommodation, feelings of isolation, mental and physical health problems, underdeveloped financial management skills, immigration issues and gaps in academic knowledge (Ellis and Johnston, 2019; Harrison, 2017; O’Neill et al., 2019; Stevenson et al., 2020).

The ‘capabilities approach’ (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 2001) is a normative theoretical framework for social justice. It argues that, as individuals, we have different life outcomes that we have good reason to value, founded in our beliefs, experiences and sociocultural context. We have different capabilities to achieve these outcomes – freedoms that can be constrained by resources, knowledge, laws and other factors. The role of policy and practice interventions is to remove ‘unfreedoms’ and permit the individual’s pursuit of what has value for them. Capabilities are expressed through everyday ‘functionings’ – what the person is able to do.

Educational participation is one such collection of functionings. Wilson-Strydom (2016) argues that one can specify a collection of core capabilities that underpin a socially-just higher education system, including respect, dignity and recognition, emotional health and social relations/networks. Where these are absent, the individual’s functionings are constrained and their likelihood of achieving their valued outcomes is compromised.

This paper will draw on the capabilities approach to explore the recent UK studies (Ellis and Johnston, 2019; Harrison, 2017; O’Neill et al., 2019; Stevenson et al., 2020). It will focus on the formal support available from national governments, local authorities and universities/colleges, highlighting shortcomings in policy and practice that continue to disadvantage care-experienced students by limiting their capabilities.

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Longer-term Contributions of Formal and Informal Supports for Care Leavers Symposium

Dr. Rawan W. Ibrahim (German Jordanian University), Prof. Robbie Gilligan (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin), Prof. Mark Courtney (University of Chicago), Dr. Getrude Gwenzi (University of Johannesburg), Dr. Neil Harrison (Unive)

Evidence on the challenges facing care-leavers is growing in the Global North and emerging in the Global South. There is also a growth in policy efforts and service development aimed at improving conditions and trajectories for care leavers, although in some contexts, policies and formal supports remain scarce, or non-existent. Care-leavers face challenges in a number of key domains including in higher-education, employment, establishing homes, families, and homelessness. A particular challenge is care-leavers' access to support. This symposium explores evidence on different aspects of formal and informal supports, in both the Global North and South.

Drawing on studies from England, Scotland and Wales, the first paper addresses care-leavers engagement in higher-education by situating key findings within a 'capabilities approach', underpinned by social justice. This framework argues that influence of individuals' capabilities to achieve desired outcomes can be constrained by contextual factors. The paper focuses on the role of formal support afforded by government and higher-education institutions, while shedding light on persistent shortcomings that perpetuate disadvantage of care-experienced students. Related to higher education, a second paper explores positive influences of informal support in both education and employment *over time*. This paper draws on qualitative evidence also from a combination of studies, chiefly from the Republic of Ireland and Spain. The paper reflects on influences that may be considered subtle in nature, but often key in shifting trajectories in decisively positive ways. Moreover, it offers a life-course perspective when considering influences of informal support on progress in education, and potentially in employment. Attention is given to broader contextual factors that may limit or promote progress, including the interface of professional efforts and informal support.

The contributions and interplay of informal and formal supports are also depicted in an additional two qualitative studies from the Global South, where there remains an overreliance on institutional care, and where formal support continues to be limited or scarce. Within these two particular study contexts, care-leavers may be highly stigmatised and therefore further marginalized. The study from Jordan found that despite the persistent challenge of having a forced individuality within a collectivist culture, the combination of formal and particularly informal support was instrumental in their not only overcoming previous challenges, but also in their ability to maintain more optimal pathways. Alongside the need to address structures that produce and perpetuate vulnerability, and the need to increase formal support, study implications also point to the necessity of supporting young people in ensuring they transition with social capital given that they must survive without benefits of being part of kin-groups. These implications are echoed in the paper from Zimbabwe where identities of care-leavers are also precarious. Formal transitional housing offered by some residential facilities were found to provide a continued sense of family. The various sources of informal supports were also found to have a significant impact on care-leavers' social connectedness. The study challenges a traditional notion of what constitutes a family and calls for a broader conceptualization of 'family' for care-leavers.

The final paper from the US, reports on findings from a longitudinal quantitative study that aimed to better understand whether allowing youth to remain in care until a later age reduces risks of homelessness given the typically higher risks found among care leavers when compared to the general population. The study found that each additional year in care reduced estimated odds of homelessness by 33%. In addition to targeting efforts to reduce homelessness amongst care-leavers through identifying particular characteristics, the study calls for attention to connecting care-leavers to adults willing to provide tangible support, given that adult social support was found to be a relevant protective factor.

Longer-term contributions of formal and informal supports-Forms of Support and Homelessness Among Care Leavers

Prof. Mark Courtney (University of Chicago), Dr. Nathanael Okpych (University of Connecticut)

Objectives: In the United States, care leavers experience higher rates of homelessness than the general population of youth, with rates ranging from 11 to 38% (Curry & Abrams, 2015). Prior research in the US has identified several risk and protective factors associated with care leaver homelessness, including gender (males at greater risk), maltreatment history, placement instability, behavioral or emotional problems, runaway history, residing in a group care setting, juvenile justice system involvement, family criminal history, school dropout, and prior homelessness (Prince et al., 2019; Shpiegel, 2016). Protective factors include adult social support, remaining in care into adulthood, and state expenditures on housing supports (Prince et al., 2019). Despite prior research, important knowledge gaps remain. Policymakers are keen to know whether formal support, particularly allowing youth to remain in care into emerging adulthood, reduces the risk of homelessness.

Methods: This study uses data from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH). CalYOUTH includes a representative sample of adolescents in California foster care. Interviews were conducted in 2013 when the youths were 17 years old (n = 727), and again in 2015 (n = 611) and 2017 (n = 616) when respondents were 19 and 21 years old, respectively. During the follow-up interviews respondents were asked about experiences of homelessness since their last interview, defined as staying in a “homeless shelter or in a place where people were not meant to sleep because you had no place to stay” for at least one night.

Logistic regression analyses examined predictors of youths’ likelihood of being homeless during the study period. The outcome variable captured whether youth had ever been homeless between the baseline and age-21 interviews. Since California had recently extended the age of foster care eligibility from 18 to 21, our primary interest was in examining the influence that youths’ time in extended foster care had on the likelihood of homelessness. We also investigated associations between homelessness and other characteristics and experiences of the youths captured by the baseline interview, including: demographic characteristics; maltreatment and foster care history; education; social support; perceived self-reliance; satisfaction with foster care; and other factors.

Results: Almost a third (30.9%) reported being homeless during the study period and they had been homeless for an average of 117 days; almost a third had been homeless for a week or less and nearly a fifth for over 180 days. Regression analyses identified the following statistically-significant ($p < .05$) predictors of homelessness. Each additional year in care past age 18 reduced the estimated odds of homelessness by about 33%. The estimated odds of homelessness were 82% greater for males than for females. Sexual minority youth were at greater risk of homelessness than were youth who reported being “100% heterosexual” ($OR \approx 1.74$). The estimated odds of homelessness were 1.9 times higher for youth with a history of child neglect. Placement in a residential care setting before age 18 nearly doubled the estimated odds of homelessness ($OR \approx 1.95$). And the estimated odds of homelessness were 44% lower for youth who reported that they had “enough” people to turn to for tangible support than for youth who had “no one” or “too few” people to turn to.

Conclusions: Our findings suggest that US policymakers’ investment in extending care to young adults reduces homelessness. In addition, our findings should encourage efforts by practitioners to connect care leavers with adults who are willing and able to provide tangible support. Lastly, our study adds to the findings of prior research that identifies youth characteristics that should be taken into account to better target efforts to reduce homelessness among care leavers.

Longer-term Contributions of Informal and Formal Support for Care-Leavers Symposium - The influence of formal support and the establishement of social capital: Leaving care in Jordan

Dr. Rawan W. Ibrahim (German Jordanian University)

Purpose: The problems faced by young people leaving residential care to join the adult world are well known. These problems are exacerbated in The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, where the prevailing collectivist culture values family identity as a source of self-worth and continued support, both socially and economically. Little research exists to describe the experiences of care-leavers ageing out of child protection systems in the Middle East. This is despite the pervasive use of institutions to provide long-term alternative care when children are maltreated, abandoned or institutionally removed from birth mothers due to being born as a result of significant cultural taboos, such as out-of-marriage pregnancies. This qualitative study examines longer-term strategies employed by young adults to support themselves as they transitioned from residential care to independent living in Jordan.

Methods: The first wave of semi-structured interviews and focus groups took place with forty-two care-leavers in 2007, and follow-up interviews in 2015. Participants were 50% female, between the ages of 17 to 28 years and had spent an average of 14 years in residential care (ranging from 2 to 21 years). Recognizing the need for longitudinal research with care leavers, a third follow-up study exploring longer-term developments in the lives of the same cohort is now in progress (completed N=15, expected N=30). Participants are now between the ages of 30 to 40. A particular focus is on coping with a forced individuality in a collective culture (particularly for those from ‘unknown families’). This is in parallel to a focus on the longer-term influences of formal and informal supports. A grounded theory analytical framework was employed.

Findings: The study found that care leavers struggle with the challenge of a forced individuality and independence. They felt isolated as they sought to establish themselves in adult roles without the benefit of stable resources and without the benefit of being part of a kin-group. Generally, care leavers are highly stigmatised. However, cultural traditions of extending support to individuals lacking their own natural support network and the increase of formal services contributed to overcoming adversity, and the ability to maintain more optimal pathways once achieved. Positive turning points and outcomes were identified in various life domains including accessing and succeeding in higher education, stability in employment and living conditions, creating a family, or the ability to end dysfunctional partnerships. Most importantly for many, the opportunity to establish and maintain social capital in parallel to or in lieu of natural kin-groups.

Implications: Findings continue to elucidate the importance of addressing structures that produce marginalisation and perpetuate cycles of vulnerability. Moreover, there is a need to increase understanding of contributions of both informal and formal supports to longer-term positive turning points, and in varying contexts. Given the shared patriarchal culture evident throughout the Middle East, the results of the study can inform policy and practice development in the region. The theoretical implications from this study focus on the inclusion of the cultural context within frameworks pertaining to care leavers. Alongside the need to strengthen and extend formal support, policy and practice implications point to the necessity of supporting young people to ensure they transition out of care with social capital, alongside individually planned transitions.

Main results of quantitative research about orphans in kinship care in France

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The study was carried out in 2018, in two departments of the North of France (*Nord* and *Pas-de-Calais*) with high rates of premature adult mortality. It focuses on the pathways of children who have lost their father and/or mother as well as the support provided to kinship carers. This question fits more broadly into the study of articulations between private assistance provided to children by family and friends, and public assistance, represented in this study by French Child Protection Services (*Aide sociale à l'enfance*).

As part of this study, a survey was conducted through a questionnaire sent by post to all kinship carers looking after a child or young person aged under 18 years old. The questionnaire made it possible to identify kinship carers taking care of children or young people who have lost one or both parents. The analysis compares two populations (orphans / non-orphans) and the conditions in which they are cared for by their kin.

For all children in care, there are boys and girls in almost equal number and their proportion increases with age. If they are alive, 44% of them maintain contact with their fathers and 59% with their mothers, although this contact progressively decreases throughout the duration of the placement. Their parents very rarely live together (10%) and according to kinship carers, relationship problems between the parent(s) and child or between parents are the main reasons for the child's arrival in their home. In addition, we note the importance of maternal health problems (28%) in the reasons for placing children in care. The children in care often come from large families (38%) and a quarter of the care placements simultaneously involve several siblings from the same family. Care placements are long, as evidenced by the fact that a quarter had already lasted more than 7 years prior to our survey, and were still on-going. For all children in care, most kinship carers come from the maternal side of the family, and only 8% are unrelated to the children. Data collected attest to a greater precariousness among these kinship carers than among the general population of the two departments in question. They are less often in work or looking for work than people of the same age in the general population. Not all kinship carers receive a maintenance allowance (only 88% receive it) and they do not always seem to be aware that they can receive family benefits and sometimes tax cuts, depending on the number of children they look after.

The results of the questionnaire show that the situation of orphaned children does not significantly differ from that of non-orphaned children for most criteria (large family, contact with the surviving parent, cared for by their family members and with their siblings, socio-professional category of the kinship carer, duration of placement). However, the kinship carers of orphaned children are generally younger and more often from the same generation as the child's parents or as the child him or herself, which reduces the role of grandparents. Orphans are less often the subject of educational monitoring (38% *vs* 55%) and the relatives who care for them receive maintenance allowances less often (78% *vs* 92%). The main causes identified by relatives as being at the origin of the placement of orphans are the lack of a relationship with the father (59%) and/or mother (62%). We also note that the moment at which the child arrived in the relative's home was different depending on whether the child lost their mother or their father.

Mapping the proximal system in residential child care: a qualitative study on professionals' representations

Dr. Alessandra Rigamonti (University of Milano Bicocca), Prof. Laura Formenti (University of Milano Bicocca)

This study explores from a pedagogical and systemic perspective RCC professionals' representations of the "proximal system", i.e. the actors, concrete relationships and interactive circles characterizing Residential Child Care (RCC) and the broader systems involved in their practices. How does the proximal system affect their work and their perspectives of meaning, in the process of becoming a reflexive "good enough" professional? (Gharabaghi, 2020) In order to answer this question, we analyse semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 24 RCC workers, done in the frame of ERCCI Erasmus Plus project aimed at empowering intervention in RCC through training (principal investigator E. Timonen-Kallio, see https://ercci.turkuamk.fi/en/).

Our perspective is systemic; recently, there has been a growing interest in integrated, eco/logical and holistic approaches to child protection, considering the child as a part of wider, evolving. interactive systems (Marchesini et al. 2019), valuing the context of intervention, and acknowledging its complexity, hence the limits of any approach using recipes and prefiguring lineal answers to children's needs (Rothuizen, Harbo, 2017).

According to these approaches, changes and transformations are not individual, but the emerging outcome of circular processes of interaction carried out by *individual-and-environment units*(Bateson, 1972). The focus shifts from the single individual to his/her webs of affiliation, or better, to a composition of these different sights; in this framework, RCC can be re-interpreted as a systemic intervention, far beyond a linear idea of 'protection'; intervention needs to be sensitive and responsive to the context, made of circuits of concrete, symbolic and material interactions among diverse actors, all of them having a direct impact on the child's life. This involves several actors and systems: the family of origin, health and care agencies/professionals, the school, leisure activities, and the non-human world: spaces, objects, rhythms… All of them carry different, sometimes conflicting, interests, objectives, possibilities, and presuppositions.

Intervention in childcare and protection is influenced by many entangled factors - individual, relational, organisational, and situational – expressed within concrete processes and contexts. Are RCC professionals aware of their being part of interacting and co-evolving systems? How do they represent these systems and their parts? What kind of narratives do they develop? Are they narratives of possibility or impossibility, of empowerment or disempowerment? And what are the consequences of these understandings for the development of a good, reflexive professional identity for childcare workers?

The analysis of interviews and focus groups aims at mapping all the actors and agencies named by the participants and illuminating their roles in the system. We use an interpretative framework based on micro, meso, and macro levels of systemic interaction (Formenti, 2017), in order to sketch a local, provisional theory about the impact of these narratives on the practice. We want to highlight the challenges and resources of different professionals and agencies, their reciprocal implications, and the constraints and possibilities they bring in the process of intervention. The realities 'external' to RCC may be perceived as constraints or opportunities in the design, development, and assessment of a good enough process of intervention. Transforming constraints into possibilities is itself a process of empowerment. We use our mapping to compare different narratives and to track the dynamics of agency (Lemaire, 2007), empowerment and transformation in the systemic. Despite the limitations of our study (only professionals' perspectives, a small group of participants in a limited geographic area), we hope to bring a concrete, critical and reflexive contribution to the idea of a *relational agency* (Emirbayer, Mische, 1998).

Matching in foster care: A rigorous mixed methods systematic review

Dr. Ellie Ott (Centre for Evidence and Implementation), Ms. Rebecca Dean (Centre for Evidence and Implementation), Ms. Georgina Mann (Centre for Evidence and Implementation), Ms. MacKenzie Martin (University of Oxford), Dr. Bianca Albers (Centre for Evidence and Implementation)

The majority of children in care live with a foster carer in the UK and across many countries. The decision to connect children with a particular foster family is a pivotal moment in the care journey. This systematic review looks at lived experiences of matching and the aspects that children and young people, foster carers, and children's social care practitioners say are important. It also examines the evidence on the effectiveness of matching practices. For this review, matching involves the connecting of children in care with foster families for emergency, short-term and long-term placements, including:

- The decision-making process
- The process of providing information to the child and family
- The process of introductions and moving the child or children into the household

This systematic review used rigorous processes for selecting and analysing relevant studies. An Advisory Group including representatives from the care-experienced community, policy makers, social workers, foster care managers, nonprofit sector, and researchers helped to set the review protocol and fed back on preliminary findings. This review answered the following two questions:

1. **Experiences and perceptions.** From the research literature, what factors do social workers, foster carers, and children and young people say are important for matching based on their lived experience of matching in foster care in the UK?
2. **Impact and attribution.** What is the evidence from high-income countries about how matching decisions in foster care (e.g., based on foster carer skill level) can be attributed to outcomes (e.g., placement stability, child wellbeing, foster carer wellbeing)?

The review fills a gap in the evidence base in relation to foster care specifically: little is synthesised about impact from matching decisions or about the experience of children and young people and foster carers in the whole matching process. This review builds off of existing literature reviews on matching in foster care come from teams in the Netherlands (Zeijlmans et al., 2017) and Australia (Haysom et al., 2020). These reviews focus on the decision-making process (Zeijlmans et al., 2017) and on the child and household factors that are thought of as fit in both adoption and fostering (Haysom et al., 2020). Neither review asks either of the questions outlined and neither aims to be a systematic review. As such, they omit studies already identified as useful for this review.

To date, the research team has had two researchers double screen 7006 abstracts and 249 full-text studies from databases, and also screened 1140 records from other sources. Risk of bias was assessed using the CASP checklist. Question 1 was analysed through thematic analysis in Dedoose, and iterative processes of organising codes and themes. More details on the methodology can be found using the pre-registered protocol and represents cutting edge rigour applied to qualitative research syntheses in children's social care. Final analyses will be complete by the end in April 2021.

Matching between foster families and children is crucial for the future of children in care as well as for the wellbeing of the foster carers and their families. Looking across the literature in high-income countries, effective decision-making and transition process is linked with placement stability and carer retention. Promoting stability and minimising disruptions is a fundamental principle of foster care practice, as this promotes positive attachments and is linked with better outcomes for children (Conger & Rebeck, 2001; Rubin et al., 2007).

Meeting the Relatives: Children's experiences of taking part in Lifelong Links

Dr. Nadine Fowler (CELCIS, Univer), Dr. Lisa Holmes (Rees Centre), Dr. Robert Porter (CELCIS, University of Strathclyde)

Growing up in care impacts on children's identity formation (Ferguson, 2016; Neagu & Sebba, 2019). The importance of children's knowledge of their birth family has been well researched in child welfare, with largely positive impact in the short term as well as long term (Andersson, 2009; Vanschoonlandt et al 2012). In England and Scotland, Lifelong Links is a new intervention for children in out of home care which aims to restore children's relationships with members of their extended family and other trusted adults. This is a child led intervention in which the child decides whether and when they are ready to take part in it. Lifelong Links follows on from life story work, and utilises Family Group Conferences as a mechanism for reunions with those extended family members, and other trusted adults that the child has identified. This paper will present the findings from a trial of Lifelong Links across England and Scotland that started in 2017 in 12 local authorities in England and 3 in Scotland. We will draw on the data collected as part of an independent evaluation of Lifelong Links undertaken by the Rees Centre, University of Oxford and CELCIS, University of Strathclyde.

This paper draws on 33 interviews with children and young people who took part in Lifelong Links, 10 interviews and focus groups with foster carers, 2 focus groups with residential workers, and 145 practice summaries. The paper explores children's experiences of Lifelong Links, their motivations to take part in it and their perceptions of how Lifelong Links impacted on them.

Findings suggest that Lifelong Links contributes to children's understanding of why they are in care, can strengthen the child's relationship with their carers and produces a narrative that bridges pre-care and post care experiences. Lifelong Links appears to impact on children's agency and mental wellbeing. Findings consolidate findings from other studies on the importance of children's knowledge of their birth family (Triseliotis, 1973) for their identity development and sense of belonging. In this session we will also include discussions about self-imposed and external barriers to participating in Lifelong Links and how the child welfare system in England and Scotland can move implement and incorporate child led practice for children placed in out of home care.

Missing parents, victims, young heroes, and admirable helpers: Children’s stories on their experience in judicial proceedings

Dr. Judit Strömpl (Tartu University)

Background and purpose: We all, children and adults are parts of a storied world that Polkinghorne (1988) defined as the meaning realm of human existence. Storytelling is the most natural way of being a human, being a person among other human beings. While listening and telling stories we not only make sense of what is happening with us and other people around us, but also making sense of who we are. Children, similarly to adults, participate in this meaning-making process that William Corsaro (1997) called interpretive reproduction of culture. To study children’s experiences means study their stories about their experience. In 2012-2014 an international comparative study was carried out by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) with an aim to map the development of child-friendly justice system in Europe (FRA 2015, 2017). Estonia participated in this project, i.e. children with experience of being involved into judicial proceedings were interviewed. Data was analyzed and presented in project report (FRA 2017). However, the rich qualitative interview data still enabled further, deeper secondary analysis. In this paper I am going to present the findings of analysis of children’s stories about their experiences using narrative methods. Following questions will be discussed: How the child’s experience is represented in children’s personal stories? What is the central plot in children’s stories? Who are the main actors and what roles they play in children’s life?

Data and methods: Data include 38 interview transcripts with children (16 girls and 22 boys) made in 2012-2014 in Estonia. Interview data was analyzed using narrative method of analysis with focusing on plot and characters. As stories are always co-created, i.e. stories are told to somebody (a listener), I also analyzed the interactions/dialogue between the interviewer and interviewees.

Findings: Children’s stories were influenced by interview guide, which was precisely detailed and focused on getting specific information about children’s experiences. Despite of semi-structured character of interview, children used their agency and turned the story into their own right. Sometimes it was not easy, because lot of testing questions resulted “yes” or “no” answers that we can assess as silence by the child. Most of reason of participation in judicial proceedings were cases of parental custody (child removal or divorce); the focus of stories was about missing parents or missing parental care and love; making difficult decisions while choosing between two of beloved people. Children represented themselves as victims of parental neglect or violence; parents’ inability to solve their own relational problems putting the child into difficult situation when he must solve a problem what adults cannot (e.g. how to separate the child without causing trauma). Some stories are about the system that cannot protect the child from danger and stressful situations. At the same time children acknowledge professionals who provide safety–an admirable helper whom they can trust. Children represent themselves in many situations as young heroes who can help not only themselves, but also their siblings and even their helpless parents.

Conclusion: When involving children into research it should be an opportunity to the child to tell his or her story freely. Asking testing questions as a rule results silence by the child. Allowing free storytelling by the child provides us with valuable information and help the child better to understand the situation, the events, him/herself and other people‘s behavior. The findings are important to better understanding of impact and better planning of children involvement into judicial proceedings and for helping children in their identity developing.

Misuse of power in Child and Youth Care - Children´s rights and their implementation in professional organizations

Prof. Mechthild Wolff (University of Applied Sciences Landshut)

In 2010 a broad discussion on the issue “misuse of power against children and adolescents in educational, physical and mental health institutions” started in Germany. In several European countries, in North America and Australia these discussion started earlier. Since 2010 in Germany research focusses on the question: how can the security and safety of children, as a basic children´s rights, be improved in professional organizations and which kind of organizational strategies regarding intervention, prevention and inquiry have to be implemented?

Research projects of the University of Hildesheim, the University of Applied Sciences Landshut and the University Children´s Clinic of Ulm examine the different needs of young people in care and their care givers. In focus groups, workshops and the analysis of practice examples researchers analyzed existing strategies within organisations and developed them further.

The qualitative studies indicate a lack of systematical concepts for the safety and security of children and youth within professional organisitions in Germany. Single measures, such as information sheets for children or one day workshops for professsionals, are realized but without an idea of sustainability. Findings also indicate a lack of approaches for participatory organisational development processes. Organizations do not take the chance to involve, teach and empower underpivileged parents and young people about childrens´s needs and their rights in Child and Youth Care.

Furthermore there is evidence for the necessity for professionals to question and reflect on power structures in Child and Youth Care services. Care givers with self-awareness and the ability for self-critical procedures are in need. A new definition of professional relationships, of attachment and distance between care givers, children, adolescents and young adults is overdue in the educational field. But under which circumstances can professionals develop such a delf-definition and which structures do professionals need in order to work on these issues and implement new strategies?

The presentation will discuss the main outcomes of present German studies on child protection and children´s rights in professional educational organizations. Also practical experiences with the implementation of systematical concepts for safety and security of young people within organisations will be integrated. At the end of the presentation the underlying question will be adressed: how can children and adolescents be prepared for the fact that professionals can be harmful? This question is connected to the cardinal question: how much insecurity in educational settings and relationships is necessary?

The presentation will reflect on research outcomes, practical experiences and it will suggest basic consequences for further development.

Monitoring Catalan Foster Care system

Dr. Joan Llosada (Direcció General d'Atenció a la Infància i l'Adolescència (DGAIA)), Dr. Josefina Sala (Universitat Autòma de Barcelona (UAB)), Mr. Jordi Muner (Direcció General d'Atenció a la Infància i l'Adolescència (DGAIA)), Dr. Antonio Pérez (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB))

Background: Every year countries invest a large proportion of their budget looking after children, but the results are not completely satisfying. Children in care do not reach similar levels of development, educational and wellness as their peers, who are not in care [for revision Gypen et al., 2017]. The assessment of the results of the foster care system is necessary to develop a more effective protection system, but few countries are making progress in this direction. USA is one of the first countries taking action with its *Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System* (AFCARS), which mainly evaluates safely and stability. The UK has also an evaluation system, the *Assessment and Action Records*, that assesses seven dimensions: health, education, emotional and behavioral development, family and social relationships, social presentation, identity, self-care skills and transition to independent life.

In Catalonia the Law (14/2010) stablishes the need to assess the results of the applied policies; but so far, the achievement of protection goals has not been assessed.

The aim of this project is to create a set of indicators, tools and processes to monitor the Catalan foster care system. This set will include some indicators specifically addressed to evaluate the fulfillment of DGAIA's (Catalan Child Welfare Department) obligations as the legal guardian of the Children in care.

Methods: The project has been led by an interdisciplinary group with researchers from the university and the administration. The research group built the indicator system and the instruments to collect the data to measure the indicators. This system is being validated through two consecutive processes. The first was a participatory assessment by experts that occupy different positions in the system: administration managers and officers (14), second level organizations of NGOs (4), professionals (5), Catalan researchers on this topic (7), and youths from the Catalan care leavers association (UJEC) (3). The second is a pilot implementation in which 50 children in family foster care, 50 children in institutional foster care and their professional tutors will participate. Additionally, the data of the totality of children in care in 2019, from the administrative databases, will be analyzed. To collect and validate the data, different questionnaires have been ad-hoc created and validated with cognitive interviews.

Results: In the first phase the goals that will be evaluated were selected extracting them from laws and regulations. This selection was validated by the 14 administration managers who are in charge of the DGAIA (the Catalan child welfare department). A total of 19 goals from seven areas were selected (safely, stability, health, development, education, participation and personal autonomy).

To measure the goals results, the research group designed a set of 105 indicators that were validated and prioritized by researchers, administration managers, NGOs, professionals and youths. After this process, 76 indicators were selected to be included in the subsequent pilot study.

Three different sources of data to measure the indicators have been used: administration database, professional children's tutors and children in care older than 8. A questionnaire for children and professional tutors has been created and validated. In March and April 2020 these questionnaires will be administered to 100 children in care and their tutors.

Data from questionnaires and from database system will be analyzed to evaluate the reliability, validity, redundancy and efficiency of the data collected for each indicator. The different costs and problems that may emerge during the data collection will also be assessed. The analysis of the pilot study will lead us to define a more reduced set of key indicators that can sustainably be applied every year.

In EUSARF conference the results of the pilot study will be presented.

Multinational Comparison of Out-of Home Care and Challenges for Care Leavers - A multinational comparison of care-leaving policy and legislation, challenges and the existence of care leaver organizations

Dr. Benjamin Strahl (University of Hildesheim), Prof. Wolfgang Schroeer (University of Hildesheim)

Care-leavers – those transitioning from alternative care towards young adulthood – are widely recognised as a vulnerable population, yet child protection legislation seldom applies to them because they have reached adulthood. Despite this, little internationally comparative research on care-leaving policy and legislation has been conducted.

The contribution maps multinational leaving care policy, legislation and practice in 36 countries of America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia.

The study employed an online survey to query international care-leaving policy and practices. Participants were recruited through two international associations: the International Federation of Educative Communities (FICE) and the Africa Network of Care-Leaving Researchers (ANCR). In both cases, membership in these voluntary associations consists of country representatives, who have direct knowledge of child welfare and care-leaving in their respective countries.

The presented results address the extent of legislation addressing care and aftercare (or care-leaving) among the 36 countries, to provide an understanding of international policy framework within which young people leave care. Second, we focus on the challenges that care-leavers confront in the transition towards adulthood across our international sample and lastly, the existence and funding sources of care leaver organizations.

Findings reveal that there are large differences between care-leaving policies, but overall few countries have well-developed care-leaving legislation. Within the context of suboptimal social policy, findings also reveal high vulnerability among care-leavers. After all, care-leaver self-organisations exist in about half of the countries surveyed. These care-leaver self-organisations and empowerment like participatory research have to be founded, financed and supported regionally, nationally and transnationally.

Multinational Comparison of Out-of Home Care and Challenges for Care Leavers - GROWING A YOUTH IN CARE NETWORK: ASSETS AND OBSTACLES

Ms. Jennifer Dupuis (Le Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux (CIUSSS)), Ms. Amanda Keller (McGill University, School of Social Work), Ms. Varda R. Mann-Feder (Concordia University Montreal)

Objective

This presentation will outline the issues and processes associated with developing a care leavers organization, or a youth in care network, in Canada.

The past president and the current president of CARE JEUNESSE will participate as co-presenters with the university professor who acted as an “adult ally” in the formation of their organization. Our presentation will build on a peer reviewed article we co-authored, that is the first publication that provides an account of the processes associated with developing a youth in care network in Canada and describes the experience of creating an independent youth-led organization for youth in and from care. The factors that promoted and hindered the establishment of our network will be highlighted as they apply to issues outlined in the youth engagement literature, with a focus on implications for this important work.

Methods

The presentation reflects the evolution of the newest organization led by alumni of care in Canada, Centre Amitié, Ressources et Entraide pour la Jeunesse [Friendship, Resources and Mutual Aid Center for Youth], or C.A.R.E. Jeunesse (CARE).

Comparison with the development of other networks in Canada as well as a review of relevant literature on youth led organizations formed the basis for this work.

Results

Local contexts can hinder and promote the creation of structures that encourage youth participation and advocacy in child welfare. The obstacles have to be faced by giving special focus to planning and organization, the need for training, and how to effectively manage partnerships.

Multinational Comparison of Out-of Home Care and Challenges for Care Leavers - Participation of Young People in Residential Child and Youth Care – Cross National Perspectives

Dr. Claudia Equit (TU Dortmund University)

Objectives

This lecture presents and discusses the results of an international research on the participation of young people in residential child and youth care facilities.

Looked-after children and adolescents in child welfare are particularly affected by the implementation of children's rights, especially by the right of participation [Art. 12 UN CRC]. These children and adolescents make more decisions and are much more part of decision-making forums than their peers, while at the same time, they have experienced a fundamental disregard of their rights. The significance of children´s rights for looked-after children is obvious. The Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes within this context the importance of participation itself as well as the establishment of monitoring institutions (e.g., an ombudsperson, commissioner, or inspectorate etc.).

Participation, voicing complaints, and advocacy in decision making have been extensively investigated in child and youth welfare. However, only a few studies examine participation and complaint processes in residential living groups. Due to the violent history of residential child and youth care worldwide, research examining the implementation of children's and young people's participation rights in residential living groups is of special relevance.

MethodsBased on current international studies as well as on my own ongoing research project "Participation in Organizational Cultures of Residential Child and Youth Care," funded by the German Research Association, the lecture will present and discuss participation processes in institutions. The project investigates the participation processes in different residential care facilities in several regions within Germany. Hence, participation processes, young people filing complains, and underlying power structures in living groups are analyzed. The sample includes 25 cases in four different federal states in Germany (in total 100 professionals, including 16 senior managers and 116 young people were interviewed) and were analyzed by means of the documentary method.

Results

Based on international studies, the effects, and limits of the participation of young people in residential groups are presented. For example, structures of power that hinder or promote participation are identified. A special focus is placed on the possibility for young people in living groups to present their interests and express their complaints. They are discussed in the professional discourse in relation to issues of protection against institutional violence. Results on this topic are important to assess the effects, possibilities, and limits of participation in residential living groups.

One important result is that despite the vastly different child and youth welfare systems worldwide and different studies in this field, some similar potentials and difficulties in implementing participation in residential living groups were determined.

Conclusions

Although internationally there are different structures and traditions as well as regional characteristics when it comes to residential child and youth care, some important common difficulties in the participation of young people in living groups can be identified. It is argued that these problems are part of the process of implementing participation rights in organizational contexts. A bundling of critical reflections and research on successful implementations of participation worldwide seems necessary to gain new perspectives on the participation of children and young people in care. The outlook of the lecture will therefore critically reflect on whether the current participation of young people needs to be reconsidered.

Multinational Comparison of Out-of Home Care and Challenges for Care Leavers - Participatory research with care leavers

Prof. Angela Rein (Institute for Studies in Children and Youth Services, FHNW School of Social Work), Prof. Dorothee Schaffner (Institute for Studies in Children and Youth Services, FHNW School of Social Work), Ms. Sarina Ahmed (Institute for Studies in Children and Youth Services, FHNW School of Social Work)

In the last decades, an increasing interest in the perspective of children and young people emerged, in particular in child welfare, child protection, and in social work research. Reasons that can be seen include cultural and societal changes, changes in intergenerational relationships and power structures, democratic movements or in claims concerning the rights of the child[1]. These changes have had an impact on professional and scientific development: The view of the child has become a core issue for developing social work. The comprehensive historical investigation into the context of child and youth care shone a light on a dark chapter of the practice during the 20th century. The results reveal violations of the right to self-determination, dignity, respect, non-interference, and the right to make informed decisions.

More recently, the importance of participatory research[2] in the context of social work has emerged – even in the German speaking countries[3]. Participatory research stands for a crucial approach to a better understanding of the needs of affected people. Furthermore, it stands for the respect for different forms of knowledge. In participatory research, a high potential is recognized to bridge the gap between science and practice in social work. PR enables the politicization of social inequality, and contribute to transformations of restraining conditions (reduction of inequality, enable the rights of citizen). PR also seeks to empower the people in need and to enable educational opportunities in order to approximate important aims of social work: e.g. autonomy and empowerment.

In the presentation, we will discuss the potential and the limitations of participatory action research in the context of child and youth welfare on the base of a research project. “Care Leavers research leaving care” is a participatory action research project with young people who lived for a certain time in a residential care facility and who are in transition to an independent life. The project has been conducted during the last three years in the context of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Northwestern Switzerland in the field of social work. We will present the findings worked out together with care leavers and discuss what thisthese findings and a participatory research approach can contribute to professional and scientific development in the field of leaving care.

[1] United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 The a human rights treaty define the right of every child to self-determination, dignity, respect, non-interference, and the right to make informed decisions.

[2] People with experience of their life conditions or challenges are to be involved in research projects. Depending on the grad of participation they are contributing from the beginning of defining the research design, during the research process (data collection and analysis) and during the presentation of the results.

[3] In the Anglo-American and Spanish speaking countries PR is very common (Esser, Schär, Schnurr & Schröer 2020)

Multinational Comparison of Out-of Home Care and Challenges for Care Leavers - The impact of care leaver organisations on adult care leavers

Dr. John Paul Horn (California State University–East Bay, Department of Social Work)

Background: Much research in the United States has indicated the care leaver population often fares less well than their peers in adulthood (Courtney et al., 2011; Courtney et al., 2018). However, other research has examined successful outcomes among smaller groups of care leavers in education (Horn, 2020a) and other self-determined adult experiences (work, school, family) (Horn, 2020b). However, few studies have completely captured the impact of advocacy-oriented care leaver organisations on the success of adults (Havlicek & Samuels, 2018; Havlicek et al., 2016). This study represents a new analysis of existing qualitative data sets from two previously completed studies on care leavers. The questions for this analysis include: what kinds of benefits did participants describe from their connection to care leaver organisations and how did these benefits impact their adult lives?

Methods: In two separate studies, a combined twenty-five participants were interviewed about their transition from care using a narrative approach (Riessman, 2007); one study (n=10) focused on university completion among care leavers and another study (n=15) focused on self-determined concepts of success among care leavers. In both studies, participants answered questions from a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and verified for accuracy. A novel analysis was conducted to examine participation in care leaver organisations among these participants and the impact on their lives. Data were analysed with abudctively developed codebooks (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), using *a prior* and emerging themes. Themes were further refined, analysed, and member checked for accuracy.

Findings: Findings from the two studies describe the helpful impact of care leaver organisations in participants‘ lives as they transitioned into adulthood. Such helpful impact included the provision of an informal mentor, empowerment for making healthy decisions, and camaraderie among other care leavers.

Other contributions: The presenter will give a primer on the role of care leaver organisations in affecting policy and creating community in the United States. The presenter will also describe their experiences participating in advocacy-focused care leaver organisations during their time in care and adulthood.

My Test

Dr. Tim Tausendfreund (Test City)

Test

National study of the experiences of Indigenous young people transitioning from out-of-home care in Australia

Dr. Philip Mendes (Monash), Dr. Bernadette Saunders (Monash), Dr. Samone McCurdy (Monash), Dr. Rachel Standfield (Monash), Ms. Jacinta Walsh (Monash), Ms. Lena Turnbull (Monash)

This paper presents the findings of a Monash University Department of Social Work research study, partnering with the Monash University Indigenous Studies Centre and SNAICC: National Voice for our Children.

The study, funded by the Sidney Myer Fund, investigated the numbers, programs, needs and outcomes relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care leavers across Australia, with a view to identifying good practice principles for supporting this group of young people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are over-represented at all stages of the Australian child protection system. Yet there is almost no information focusing on this group's experiences, or which examines the suitability of support provisions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care leavers.

Based on a review of existing grey and scholarly literature, and consultations via interviews and focus groups with representatives of government departments, child welfare NGOs, and Aboriginal community controlled organisations in each State and Territory, this paper presents some key recommendations for policy, practice and funding reform.

Needs of children and families attending day care centers in Spain

Prof. Iriana Santos (University of Cantabria), Ms. Laura García-Alba (University of Oviedo), Ms. Camila Abril Fernández (University of Oviedo), Prof. Carla González-García (University of Oviedo), Ms. Federica Gullo (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo)

INTRODUCTION: In Spain there is a long tradition of out of home interventions (Santos, López, Koopmans, and Del Valle, 2012). Some reports (Defensor del Pueblo Andaluz, 2008) and many of the professionals involved in child protection have pointed out the need to establish alternative secondary prevention measures that pay attention to children, adolescents and families at risk, avoiding the emotional and economic cost of out of home care interventions. Some regional child welfare systems have promoted the opening of day care centers as a resource of social integration alternative to out-of-home care. These programs are focused on the compensation of social, educational and family deficiencies (Sánchez Ramos, 2011).

OBJECTIVE: This study aims to examine the characteristics and needs of children and families attended in day care centers and the kind of intervention that they received.

METHOD: The sample is composed of 16 day centers that in total serve about 600 children and adolescents of one autonomous community of Spain. To obtain the information, files review was used. Data collection was about some children characteristics (sex, age, nationality, mental or physical health problems, drug abuse,…), some parents' characteristics (relationship status, some difficulties such as violence, economic or mental health problems) and some aspects referred to the intervention (reason for referral, duration and purpose of intervention,…).

RESULTS: Participants consisted of 209 children and adolescents (46.6% girls and 53.4% boys) aged between 6 and 21 years old (M = 12.4; SD = 3.21) placed in day care centers. 35.9% came from single-parent families, predominantly headed by women (28.7% versus 9.7%). The average number of children per family was 2.26 (SD=1,02) and almost half of them (49.5%) came from families whose parents were separated or divorced.

Most of the children and adolescents were having some kind of contact with their mother and/or father. A lot of information about parents' characteristics were missing in files, so results should be interpreted with caution. The most important problems detected in families were severe financial problems, domestic violence, alcoholism and drug abuse and mothers suffered from mental health problems.

Regarding children and adolescents, a significant number of them were receiving psyquiatric and/or psychological treatment, a high number of them presented some kind of suicidal behavior and drug abuse and violence behavior.

About the referral to the facility, the main reason for opening de file was related to adverse family situations, frequently detected by social services. Another important finding was the wide range of interventions and the extended duration of some of them. The most frequent type of child abuse was the inability of parents to control de child/adolescent behavior or some type of neglect and almost all the interventions were drawn to children and adolescents.

CONCLUSIONS: The main outcomes of this research are the following: first, the lack of information in many files makes difficult draw definitive conclusions about the type of families attended in this facilities and what kind of intervention they receive. Nevertheless, the findings point out that these families show an important number of vulnerability factors. Some of them seem related to gender. These factors may be causing a significant impact on the children and adolescents resulting in mental health problems, violent behavior or drug use. Last, there are few interventions focus on parents and the majority are targeted on children and adolescents.

Needs of Youth and Parents from Multi-Problem Families in the Search for Youth-Initiated Mentors

Ms. Natasha Koper (Utrecht University & University of Amsterdam), Dr. Hanneke Creemers (University of Amsterdam), Dr. Levi van Dam (University of Amsterdam), Prof. Geert Jan Stams (University of Amsterdam), Prof. Susan Branje (Utrecht University)

Background: Youth-Initiated Mentoring (YIM) is an innovative approach in which youth nominate a mentor from among the supportive adults within their social networks. A mentor is a non-parental figure who provides a young person with guidance and support. YIM is a hybrid approach: it combines formal support, that is, professional care, and informal support, that is, support from the natural mentor. Including a YIM mentor in mental health care for youth seems promising for improving a wide range of youth outcomes. Yet, little is known about what youth and parents, including youth and parents from multi-problem families, look for when searching a YIM mentor. Moreover, not all youth succeed in finding and positioning a mentor, suggesting that some youth could benefit from more guidance in choosing a mentor. To better understand the needs of youth and parents, this qualitative study assesses what they search for in a mentor, and what mentors believe they can offer youth. To our knowledge, no studies have documented the needs of youth and parents who were unable to find a mentor. By including their perspectives as well, we can gather knowledge on potential barriers of finding a YIM mentor, that could be used to remove these barriers and help youth in finding a mentor.

Methods: The interviewed families were recruited from among the participants in a multi-site quasi-experimental study of the InConnection approach in the Netherlands (Koper et al., 2020). We selected participants for the interviews based on background characteristics by which we aimed to seek the maximum variation in experiences. We interviewed 15 youth, 13 parents and 8 YIM mentors from 16 systems, of which 11 had positioned a mentor and 5 did not. Thematic analysis was conducted in NVivo.

Results: This study indicated that youth and parents from multi-problem families unanimously voiced their needs for a strong connection and trust in mentoring relationships. Most youth knew adults that met these needs which led to these adults being positioned as mentors. This study was unique by including the perspectives of families who had not successfully positioned a mentor, which showed that they were unsuccessful due to a lack of trusting relationships. Youth and parents preferred mentors that were sensitive to youth's needs, helped them obtain a better future and (in some cases) provided discipline, rules and structure. Overall, these needs and what mentors said to offer matched quite well.

Conclusion: Our findings demonstrated that most youth of multi-problem families are successful at finding a mentor to involve in their treatment with the current level of support from professionals and parents, despite their increased risk for trust issues, and the common belief that their families have weak social ties. Yet, a small number of youth were unable to find a mentor, because they did not trust others and they did not want to ask for or accept help. For these youth, care involving a YIM mentor may not have been the best approach, due to their unwillingness or the impossibility to position a mentor. In these cases, mental health professionals could first target the factors that hinder the search for a YIM mentor and the use of informal support sources in general, such as creating trust and being able to seek and accept help.

NEET or EET? Predictive factors of the NEET status (Not in Employment, Education, and Training) in Youth in the city of Porto

Ms. Maria Helena Pimentel (Faculty of Psychology and Education at the University of Porto), Prof. Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto)

Background: The NEET population - Not in Employment, Education, and Training - accounts for 10,3% of the Portuguese population and 9,5% of the young population in Northern Portugal. Being NEET has an important psychological meaning for those who are in this situation, and constitutes a socially and economically expensive reality for the community/society. The high rates of youth unemployment and the socio-economic consequences associated with the NEET situation have led to an increasing urgency for political intervention. Being a NEET youngster constitutes a panoply of psychological, emotional, financial, and health challenges. It is also a significant risk factor in the transition into adulthood, exposing NEET youngsters to social exclusion, chronic unemployment, and poverty.

The reality of young people in residential care (RC) intersects with that of NEET youth. In Portugal, in 2019, 97.3 % of children/youth in alternative care were placed in RC. Most (64.6%) of the 2,476 care leavers in 2019 were over 15 years. It is difficult for care leavers to integrate into the labour market and proceed to an active life because they leave care without a support network and skills for employability. A proven result in determining the “success” of care leavers is whether they become NEET or, on the contrary, EET (Dickens & Marx, 2018).

Objectives: This study aims to identify the psychological characteristics of NEET youngsters in Porto. Specific goals are to explore the coexistence, within the same life pathway, of RC experience and the NEET status; identify the impact of the RC experience on NEET situation, as well as identify risk and protection factors related to NEET status in a paired sample of young people in NEET and EET situation.

Methodology: One-hundred-fifty NEET youngsters, aged 18 to 30 years, and a paired group of 150 EET ones will participate in this study. Data will be collected using the Stress Perception Scale, World Health Organization Abbreviated Quality of Life Assessment Instrument - WHOQOL-BREF, Scale of Social Provisions, Resilience Scale for Adults, Brief Problem Monitor, and an ad-hoc questionnaire on participants’ pathway and life contexts. The data will be collected resorting to a digital application.

Results and Conclusions: The results of this study are expected to lead to the definition of practices that promote the success of training and/or professional integration based on evidence, in order to reduce the NEET incidence, especially among young people who have had RC experiences. It is critical to better prepare the way out to adulthood, as well as to increase care leavers’ support.

References:

Dickens, L., & Marx, P. (2018). NEET as an outcome for care leavers in South Africa: The case of Girls And Boys Town. *Emerging Adulthood*, *8*(1), 64- 72. https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696818805891.

Networking in the child protection system: the attitudes of professionals.

Dr. Sara Pérez-Hernando (University of Barcelona), Dr. Nuria Fuentes Peláez (University of Barcelona)

Background:
There are many agents and professionals involved in the child protection system. We can find public institutions, NGOs and professionals that interact sporadically with users, which implies that attention to families can become a set of poorly structured interventions (Amorós et al., 2010). The more diversification, the more risk of fragmentation and lack of coordination between intervention agents and between services (Stukes-Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). For this reason, only a good organization of the services and a planning of the actions will allow to develop a good professional practice.
Objective:
The objective of this communication is to examine attitudes towards the need for networking of professionals working in the child protection system by implementing the “Walking in Family” program.
Participants:
The sample is made up of 79 professionals who participated in 14 focus groups from two regions of Spain (Castilla La Mancha and Catalunya), 75.94% women (60) and 24.06% men (19), with an average of 13.3 years of professional experience in the area of child protection, the training of professionals is varied, 37.97% are social workers (30), 35.44% are psychologists (28), 13, 92% are pedagogues (11), 11.39% are social educators and 1.26% are philologists (1). On the other hand, 93 professionals from Spain (69) and Portugal (24) responded to questionnaires about their attitudes and perceptions regarding networking. Of the 93 professionals, 82.8% are women (77) and the remaining 17.2% are men (16) with an average age of 43.62 years. In line with the professionals who participated in the discussion groups, 38.7% are psychologists (36), 30.1% are social workers (28), 27.9% have an educational profile (26).
Method:
It has been analysed through focus groups (n = 79) and questionnaires (n = 93) the attitudes regarding the networking of professionals who have participated in the group intervention program for reunification in Spain “Walking in Family”.
Results and conclusion:
The quantitative data show the valuation of the professionals with respect to the work in network before starting the socio-educational program “Walking in family”, while the qualitative data make reference to the evaluation of the coordination and of the elements that have facilitated or complicated the work in network in the implementation of the program.
The quantitative and qualitative data coincide in highlighting the need to strengthen networking in order to implement this type of intervention programs with families in the child protection system. In this sense, professionals consider that the main thing to promote networking is to be able to articulate the knowledge of the different disciplines involved, this articulation implies that each professional must maintain their specificity but being able to think together and agree on actions that must be carried out and that, for the program to be effective, there must be a continuous interaction between professionals that allows, not only to exchange resources, but also to negotiate and establish common objectives.

Keywords: Child protection; reunification; networking; professional attitudes

Outcomes assessment in therapeutic residential care: a longitudinal analysis.

Mrs. Alba Águila-Otero (University of Oviedo), Dr. Sergio Fernández-Artamendi (Universidad Loyola), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo)

Therapeutic Residential Care (TRC) is the child welfare system's response to the high demanding needs of some adolescents with emotional and/or behavioural problems as well as several risk behaviours. In these programmes, a specific educational and clinic intervention is developed to reduce the problematics in less time possible. The specialization of residential care implies the use of specific resources and models in TRC, but most of the programmes are not evidence-based programs, and little is known about the effectiveness and results obtained after the intervention.

The main objective of this work is to analyse the results of the intervention in TRC related to drug abuse, mental health problems and perceived well-being.

The sample was extracted from a research project that analyses the profile and needs of young people in TRC. Participants consisted in 64 adolescents (64.1% boys, 35.9% girls) between 13-17 years old (*M*= 15.27; DT = 1.31) paced in TRC programmes. The sample came from 15 facilities located in different Spanish regions: Cantabria, Basque Country, Catalonia, Castilla y León, Madrid and Tenerife. Youngsters filled out standardized questionnaires: *Cannabis Problems Questionnaire for Adolescents* (CPQ-A-S), *Rutgers Alcohol Problems Index* (RAPI), *Youth Self-Report* (YSR) and *Personal Well-Being Index* (PWI). Questionnaires were filled out in two moments: (1) at the beginning of the study and; (2) when adolescents left the centre, always with more than three months between each measure.

More than half of the sample (64.1%) had significant problems with cannabis use and 65% had problems with alcohol use at the beginning of the study. More than 65.1% of adolescents were clinical in mental health screening in the first measure. Longitudinal analysis showed a significant reduction in cannabis problems in the second measure, but alcohol use problems remained at the same level. Regarding mental health problems, a significant reduction was found in some syndrome scales such as anxiety-depression, attentional problems and aggressive behaviour, as well as the broadband scales (internalizing, externalizing and total). Finally, concerning the level of well-being, a significant increase was found in half of the assessed areas, especially in the level of satisfaction with the centre where they lived.

Reduction in cannabis use problems and mental health problems suggest good results after the stay in TRC programme. The lack of improvement in alcohol use problems may be due to a failure in the instrument choice, that measure alcohol problems in a whole year, and some adolescents spent less time in TRC facilities, or cultural aspects with a high prevalence of alcohol use in adolescent population in the country. The growth in level of well-being, especially the satisfaction with the facility, suggest a good global view of the intervention by youngsters, who initially did not want to be in a TRC institution. An in-depth analysis of results and effectiveness of the intervention in TRC is needed, with a larger sample and more measures along the time (beginning, middle and end of the intervention).

Outcomes of open adoption: how Australian adoptees from care compare with their peers in the general population

Prof. Harriet Ward (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Ms. Helen Trivedi (Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

Abstract

Introduction

This paper reports on a study that examined the life trajectories of a cohort of 210 children adopted from care in New South Wales. It focusses on the 60 young people who were eighteen or over at follow-up and explores their adult outcomes.

Aim

All the young people in the study had experienced numerous adversities before entering their adoptive homes and were at risk of poor, or extremely poor, outcomes in adulthood. The paper aims to explore how their life trajectories changed after entry and asks how their adult outcomes compared with those of other young people in the Australian population.

Methods

Data concerning children's pre-adoption experiences were collected from administrative files and adoption records; data concerning subsequent experiences were collected through responses to an on-line survey and through in-depth interviews with adult adoptees and adoptive parents. The interviews covered the life experiences of 25 of the 60 adult adoptees and provide a rich source of qualitative data showing their perspective. This complements the quantitative data from administrative records and survey responses.

Data concerning the adoptees educational qualifications, access to higher education, employment status, substance misuse, criminal convictions, formal mental health diagnoses and mental health issues, and ongoing support from adoptive parents could be compared both with a study of Australian care leavers, many of whom were of a similar age, and also with Australian population data.

Results

At entry to their adoptive homes the adoptees showed high levels of developmental delay, emotional and behavioural problems and poor academic progress. The findings show considerable progress in these areas after placement. Adoptive parents were very proactive in accessing mental health support, in negotiating with schools and helping the children catch up with their education. Those adoptees who had reached adulthood at the time of the follow up showed more evidence of positive outcomes than young care leavers. A composite measure of outcome indicated that almost as many young men as young women had achieved 'satisfactory well-being in adulthood'. In comparison with the general population, the adoptees had similar outcomes in terms of basic qualifications, higher education, full time employment, mental health diagnoses and experiencing domestic abuse (women). However markedly more adoptees than other Australians were NEET (not in education, employment or training) and/or misusing substances and male adoptees were considerably more likely to have been victims of domestic abuse.

Discussion

The paper explores the factors that contributed to the adoptees' progress after entering their adoptive homes, and their subsequent adult outcomes. Data from the interviews gives the adoptees' own perspectives on the distance they had travelled and the ways in which their adoptive parents had helped them overcome past adversities. Most adoptees were leading lives that were very different from those of their birth parents and their siblings who had remained at home; open adoption policies made this clear, and the disparities could sometimes be a source of unease. Not all the adoptees had made a successful transition to adulthood, but almost all had a committed adult, in the form of an adoptive parent, upon whom they could rely, who supported them through

vicissitudes and helped them overcome setbacks. The discussion considers the nature of this commitment, and the extent to which it acted as a protective factor in promoting better outcomes.

Implications

The findings are largely positive and indicate that open adoption should be considered as a potential route to permanence when children in care cannot safely return to their birth families. They also indicate how long-term foster care might better aligned with adoption to promote stronger opportunities for residential and psychological permanence for care leavers.

Parents' COVID-19-related stress and children's emotional difficulties: A study from Italy.

Dr. Elena Canzi (Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan), Dr. Laura Ferrari (Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan), Dr. Giulia Lopez (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan), Dr. Francesca Danioni (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan), Prof. Sonia Ranieri (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Piacenza), Prof. Daniela Barni (Università degli Studi di Bergamo), Prof. Rosa Rosnati (Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan)

A growing body of studies has worldwide documented the negative impact of COVID-19 restrictive measures to contain the spread of the virus on children's psychological well-being. The role of parental COVID-19-related stress and the specific impact of different parental stressors on children's well-being are underexplored. The current study was aimed at investigating the association between children's (3-17 years of age) emotional difficulties and some specific sources of parental stress after the first lockdown period. Specifically, according to the multidimensional conceptualization of stress experienced during this health emergency, we considered the fear of contagion, socioeconomic and work-related concerns, work-family balance and family life arrangements difficulties, and stress related to the limitations of social interactions. 506 Italian parents filled in an online questionnaire at the end of June 2020. Results showed that parental perceived stress related to the limitation of social interactions and family life arrangements significantly contribute to children's emotional difficulties. Our findings suggested focused interventions aimed at buffering the negative impact of the pandemic on younger generations.

Participation and complain management in residential living groups - perspectives of young people and staff members.

Dr. Claudia Equit (TU University Dortmund), Mrs. Antonia Finckh (Techniche Universität Dortmund), Prof. Uwe Uhlendorff (Univery TU Dortmund)

Objectives

Participation, voicing complaints, and advocacy in decision making were investigated extensively in child and youth welfare. However, only a few studies examine participation and complaint processes in residential living groups.

This lecture contributes to close this research gap by means of the qualitative research project “Participation in organizational cultures of residential youth care”, funded by the German Research Association (DFG). The project is the first to investigate participation as well as complaint procedures in different residential care facilities in Germany. Within this context, underlying power structures of participation processes are reconstructed, respectively. The planned lecture will present a theoretically supported typology of participation processes of young people in residential youth care facilities. The findings will be corroborated with extracts from group discussions and presented.

Methods

The objective of the research project is to investigate the participation dynamics of and opportunities to complain for young people in different residential care facilities in several regions within Germany. Hence, participation processes, young people filing complains and underlying power structures in living groups were analyzed. The sample includes 25 cases in four different federal states in Germany (in total 100 professionals, including 16 senior managers and 116 young people were interviewed). The data collection was capped at 25 cases because a theoretical saturation was reached with the sample. Every case includes group discussions with young people, staff members, and expert interviews with the senior managers. In addition, individual interviews with young refugees in residential care facilities were conducted as well. All interviews and group discussions were analyzed using the documentary method (Bohnsack 2014). The results include the complete analysis of the collected data.

Results

A typology of an institutionalized everyday life in living groups is presented in this lecture. This typology includes typical participation processes, complaint management, and underlying power structures in the facilities. The interviewed young people reveal crucial problems within the organizations. Our research identifies these problems and relate them to the views of interviewed professionals. The results giv a glance at meaningful participation for young people in everyday life matters and present organizational subcultures in living groups, which promote the participation rights of young people in residential care facilities.

Participation and Motivation in the Transition from Adulthood to Care - Negotiating Motivation in Transition to Adulthood

Ms. Anne Riise (UiT - The Arctic University of Norway), Dr. Veronika Paulsen (NTNU Social Research)

Name of session chair: Veronika Paulsen

Objective

The concept of motivation is often mentioned in studies of care leavers in transition to adulthood, both as an important factor for getting a job, pursuing higher education etc. and as an implicit condition for consenting or wanting further follow up in transition to adulthood. Even though many studies point at motivation as an important concept, few studies have empirically studied how motivation is understood and negotiated, and what factors that can have an impact on young people's motivation, which makes this an important issue to look further into. The aim of our presentation is therefore to shed light on and discuss the concept of "motivation" and look at how motivation is understood and negotiated. We also shed light on and discuss how different understandings of motivation can affect how child welfare employees meet and work with young people in transition to adulthood. The aim is to suggest implications for after care practice, considering the youth´s contribution and cooperation as their position changes when they reach the age of majority.

Method

Our presentation is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with 39 young people leaving care and 42 employees in child welfare services, carried out in the project "After care - a good transition to adulthood?". In the analysis, we look into how child welfare employees talk about and work with youth´s motivation, and how youth talk about their decision of continuing receiving support from child welfare service. We explore employees and young people's perceptions of the concept motivation, and if and how motivation is negotiable. We also look at the connection between participation and motivation, and what factors positively influence young people's motivation, and which factors may contribute to lack of motivation.

Results

We find that the employees´assessment of the youths motivation or lack of motivation often is closely connected to whether young people are offered support in transition to adulthood or not. Employees communicate motivation in different ways; as a work method, as young people's attitudes and as explanations when assessing young people's needs in after care. Young people's motivation seems to be closely related to their possibilities of participation and being heard, especially related to what support they need in transition to adulthood. Overall, we find that motivation seem to develop and being negotiated in established relationships between the youth and the employee, where the youth´s participation seems crucial. Drawing on these results, we discuss how young people's motivation seems influenced by both institutional factors, relational factors and individual factors.

Conclusions

It seems like the responsibility of motivation and "being motivated" often is individualised, and less considered processes of negotiation where employees play a crucial role. This also implies seeing motivation as a static phenomenon, rather than processes in development and change. Young people's motivation seems to involve and develop in processes where their experiences of participation seem to be crucial. Participation refers to being included and recognised as an individual, contributor and a citizen. In further after care practice, we suggest a focus on a present child welfare service, with employees able to offer youth their time and support in after care, as motivation is mutual developing relational and individual processes.

Participation and Motivation in the Transition to Adulthood from Care

Dr. Veronika Paulsen (NTNU Social Research)

CoRiT – Community of Researchers in Transition, is a subgroup of INTRAC (International Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care). CoRiT comprises postgraduate students who study transitions to adulthood from care. The network has around 60 members from different parts of the world. In this symposium six CoRiT-members will shed light on issues related to care leavers' motivation for, and participation in, aftercare services and research.

The conference theme: "The Perspective of the Child" can be understood as an attempt to involve young people's voices and experiences in practice and research. However, there is a need to even include aspects of young people's *participation and agency* to provide a deeper understanding of what is embedded in a child perspective. This seems to be even more significant when studying the transition to adulthood from care, as the shift from "childhood" to "adulthood" also involves changed expectations to agency, self-determination and responsibility. Leaving care practice thus represents a challenging balance between the young person's self-determination, service involvement and professional practices that are sensitive towards the young person's needs and resources (Propp, Ortega & NewHeart, 2003).

The contributions present findings on

1. The role of motivation in service participation, and how motivation and participation are negotiated (Riise and Paulsen)
2. Service participation amongst specific subgroups of care leavers; young people in residential care and care leavers experiencing early parenthood (Bollinger and Purtel Philip)
3. Research participation amongst care leavers with disabilities (Bennwik)
4. A meta perspective on how to use research and discourses on transitions to further development (Keller)

References

Propp, J., Ortega, D. M., & NewHeart, F. (2003). Independence or interdependence: Rethinking the transition from "ward of the court" to adulthood. *Families in Society*, *84*(2), 259-266. https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.102

Participation and Motivation in the Transition to Adulthood from Care - engaging and inclusive practice in care leaver early parenting interventions

Ms. Jade Purtell (Monash University)

Chair: Veronika Paulsen

Objectives:

This research has sought to investigate the issues surrounding care leaver early pregnancy and parenting from the perspectives of service providers working with young people transitioning from care, and from young people transitioning from care themselves. The literature identifies a broad range of precipitating factors contributing to the over-representation of care leavers in young parent populations. Leaving care literature locates care experienced young people as an already vulnerable cohort. There is growing recognition of the disruption to relationships caused by placement in care and placement instability and many attribute early parenting to young people's desire to create family relationships they feel they don't otherwise have. The literature further identifies care leaver parents as being at risk of a 'surveillance bias' by child protection authorities which can disincentivise care leavers from participating in support services for fear of losing their children. In a two-phase study service providers were recruited in the first instance to scope out issues ahead of the recruitment of young people. Response rates have been low from young people transitioning from care however service providers have been easier to access and have provided great insight into the issues identified by the literature for young care leaver parents.

Method:

14 service provider staff were consulted across 5 focus groups and interviews in the state of Victoria in Australia to scope their perspectives on the issues for care experienced young people becoming pregnant and parenting. Services represented included leaving care and after care support services, home-based care providers and specialist parenting program workers all with experience working with young care leavers either in care or post care who became parents prior to their 21st birthdays.

Results:

Service providers felt that young people transitioning from care had few family, social and community supports and were vulnerable to abusive and exploitative relationships as a result. Service providers felt that many pregnancies and incidences of early parenting resulted from these relationships. Service providers also reported that care leavers felt child protection involvement with their own children to be re-traumatising and disempowering. Interventions which did not privilege respect of, and relationship-building with care leavers could cause their disengagement. Disengagement could increase protective concerns and contribute to further interventions and removal of children. There were also reports of young people making better life choices following having their children and working closely with intensive parenting support workers to build better lives for themselves and their children. The results indicate that respectful, relationship-based practice increases young people's participation in support services and increases motivation to work with services to improve their circumstances.

Conclusions:

Care leaver early parenting is a complex issue that may require a rethink of the way that services are typically provided to young people transitioning from care and parents experiencing child protection interventions with their children. Service providers felt that care leaver parents were under closer scrutiny by the service system, but that this was warranted in many cases. Service providers acknowledged at the same time that this scrutiny did not necessarily result in more assistance but could rather cause increased anxiety and a paranoia of child removal that could ultimately discourage care leaver parents from seeking support and accessing assistance. Creating barriers to accessing services for this cohort may put their children at greater risk and increase their likelihood of being removed from their care leaver parents in an intergenerational cycle of child protection involvement.

Participation and Motivation in the Transition to Adulthood from Care - Engaging Care Leavers with Disabilities in Research

Ms. Ingri-Hanne Braenne Bennwik (VID Specialized University)

Objective: The aim of this presentation is to reflect upon challenges in engaging care leavers with disabilities in research. Registry data shows that between 5-10% of the care leaver population in Norway have a disability. There is little research on this group of care leavers both nationally and internationally, and even less research based upon the perspectives of care leavers themselves.

Method: As part of my ongoing phd-studies, I wanted to conduct semi-structured qualitative interviews with care leavers with disabilities about their own experiences of support in transition to adulthood. Due to confidentiality-matters, I needed to recruit the participants via child welfare workers. I was in contact with 83 “gatekeepers”, representing over 35 different organizations within the aftercare field; child welfare offices in local municipalities, child welfare institutions, user organizations, other researchers, governmental organizations, etc. Despite a very extensive recruitment process, it has proven almost impossible to both identify care leavers with disabilities, and to actually establish contact with them. All this effort resulted in only three interviews. As a next step we informed about the study in FB-groups for social workers in child welfare. This first resulted in one more participant, but the information was spread and we finally got four more participants, and ended up with eight young people taking part in the study. In this presentation, I would like to reflect upon some situations that occurred in the recruitment-process, and use this as a starting point to highlight some of the challenges in engaging this specific group of care leavers in research.

Findings: The child welfare workers did not identify care leavers as being disabled, even in cases where the young persons received disability benefits or had severe impairments. When using health related terms instead of “disability” I got some more responses, but most often the health problems had not been addressed to the young person in question, and hence made it difficult to continue the recruitment-process. When talking to care leavers themselves, individually and in user organizations, they did not identify with the category “disabled”. Neither did they use the term “disability” to describe their impairments, or the challenges they face in their everyday life. The few care leavers that I have interviewed, described that their disabilities and their impairments were not the responsibility of child welfare services. None of them had received support related to these issues in their transition out of child welfare services. Still, five out of eight had diagnoses that qualified for disability benefits at the time of the interview. Only one had income from work.

Discussion: This lack of identification evokes several interesting reflections: What understanding of disability is at play when neither care leavers or social workers identify youths as disabled? How can leaving care research address this category of young people when they do not identify with the category themselves and when child welfare services do not see them as disabled? My viewpoint is that we need to address this issue both in perspective of research ethics, but also as a matter of research validity. I wonder if we can use disability as a theoretical perspective, but might have to think differently regarding research categories and recruitment. One way forward could be to recruit young people who need extensive support after aging out of child welfare services and explore how they construct their identity in light of both capacity and need for support. Another approach could be to problematize the medical model of disability, by not basing studies like this on diagnosis/impairments, and rather explore forms of social oppression that falls within the social relational model of disability.

Participation and Motivation in the Transition to Adulthood from Care - “Let’s take it back to the big questions”: From specific focus on transitions from care to adulthood to further important developments in child care

Dr. Samuel Keller (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family)

name of the session chair and/or contact person for the joint proposal: **Veronika Paulsen**

Context and Objectives

In the past decade, almost no other group in residential and foster care stands for a professionally important and gratifying trend in international research and practice-exchanges like the so-called “Care Leavers”: They represent a trend towards seriously approaching the child’s perspective.

The needs, experiences and challenges of these young people, who are in transitions from care to adulthood in various dimensions, have been overlooked, forgotten or even ignored for decades. Although we have known associated challenges for a long time, “Care Leavers” were not on an overarching, coordinated agenda, either in practice and policy or in research.

In the meantime, research and practice have demonstrated the urgency of their life situations in many countries with a great deal of commitment and they have pushed ahead with appropriate adjustments. One strong and central argument here was the young people’s view of their lives in and after care and their ideas and needs for a more self-determined and satisfying (future) life.

Through the subject-oriented understanding of these processes, it was possible to convey, that governmental responsibility for appropriate accompaniment and support (in the sens of “parenting”) cannot end with coming of age.

Therefore, the question arises whether this research-practice-medal could have only a golden side or maybe also a backside. Thus I’m interested in the question and discussion of benefits and challenges that occur:

- when addressing and possibly isolating ”leaving care” as a specific, relevant transition by research and practice,
- and – in specification – when addressing “Care Leavers” or as some subgroups as specific and marginalised groups.

Method

In the sense of a critical, meta-analytical reflection of field access, methods and dissemination of the results, I ask these two questions to three studies with young people in transition from care to adulthood, in which I have participated. First, I will present hypotheses for discussion that relate to benefits and risks when we conduct research not only with “care leavers” but also with specific sub-groups at this stage. In the three studies, these were the following: unaccompanied minor asylum seekers arriving to and leaving Federal Asylum Centres in Switzerland (multi-perspective approach – including young people); young mothers leaving mother-child-care (longitudinal); Adult people with residential care experiences (hermeneutical reconstruction of biographies). Secondly, I will present hypotheses for discussion regarding the significance of the focus on leaving care for further relevant phases of child and youth welfare like planning and entering care, (everyday) living in care or changing care settings.

Results & discussion

At the end of the symposium with reference to this as well as to the previous presentations, we will discuss some theses, which go back to some reasoning of leaving care discourses:

- Let’s talk about hearing and understanding young people’s needs in care – instead of losing time finding consensus on ideas of a joint leaving-care-concept.
- Let’s talk about individual and group-based facilitation of diversity, participation, relationship and motivation in care – instead of defining specific care leaver groups.
- Let’s talk about quality of residential care om the whole – instead of quality in transitions to adulthood.
- Let’s talk about accompanying and advising creative young people – instead of (over-)controlling and (over-)standardising goals of and time after care.

Participation and Motivation in the Transition to Adulthood from Care- Young people in residential care: their experiences of stability and the impact on participation and motivation

Ms. Jenna Bollinger (Monash University)

Session chair: Veronika Paulson

Objective: Explore the implications of stability within a residential care placement on a young person's motivation and participation and the links between. This presentation will explore the experiences of staff (n= 13) and young people (n= 8) who have worked and lived in residential care in NSW, Australia regarding young people's experiences of stability and instability and how this has been personally and professionally perceived as impacting on their motivation and participation in various ways.

Method: Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with staff members and young residential care leavers. Interviews with staff members with various levels of experience were undertaken, from one year to over 20 years' experience, from floor staff to upper management. Semi-structured interviews were also undertaken with young people who had experienced residential care, from two years to eight years, with various amounts of placement instability. Interviews explored perspectives of instability and stability and the impact.

Results: The subjective experience of stability for the participants appears to contribute to increases in motivation and participation. This appears across multiple domains including participation within the house and school, reductions risky behaviours. The opposite was also noted , with instability leading to decreases in household participation and increases in risky behaviour outside the house. The paper will discuss the factors that contributed to stability and the impact these had.

Conclusion: The extant literature has not demonstrated any particular reparative effects of stability, being typically measured via a 'placements-over-time' paradigm. While the current research is qualitative in nature and therefore not representative, correlations were drawn between the subjective experience of stable caregiving, and the subjective experience of changes to motivation and participation of the young people within residential care from their own points of view and the viewpoints of staff members. It is notable that these changes appear to have extended, for some participants, beyond the residential care placement into adulthood. These findings will be discussed with reference to the extant literature on instability and the theories of attachment and neurodevelopment.

Participation of Children Involved in the Child Protection System – Validation of the Meaningful Participation Assessment Tool (MPAT)

Ms. Floor Middel (University of Groningen), Dr. Wendy Post (University of Groningen), Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen), Prof. Hans Grietens (KU Leuven)

Objectives

Children have the right to participate in child protection investigations, but research suggests that they do not participate much. To advance research on children's participation in the child protection system, we present the Meaningful Participation Assessment Tool (MPAT). This tool is based on the Model of Meaningful Participation (Bouma et al., 2018), which describes that meaningful participation consists of informing, hearing, and involving children. The MPAT measures the extent in which child protection professionals enable children to participate and consists of 13 items. Items on ***informing*** measure whether children are informed about 1) their right to grow up without violence, 2) their right to participate, 3) the participation process, 4) the child protection report, 5) the investigation process, 6) outcomes of decision-making processes, and 7) how their perspectives were given weight in decision-making processes. Items on ***hearing*** measure whether children are 8) seen, 9) had a conversation about a child protection topic, and 10) had an individual meeting with a professional. Items on ***involving***measure whether 11) children's views on the decision were heard, 12) they or their representative was present during the decision-making meeting, and 13) their views were given weight in the decision-making meeting. The aim of this study is to examine the MPAT's reliability, construct validity, and external validity.

Method

We validated the MPAT based on 292 Dutch child protection cases. We read the information in case files and coded whether children were informed, heard, and involved in decision-making processes in child protection cases. We computed Cohen's Kappa values to test reliability and conducted a Mokken scale analysis (MSA) to examine the MPAT's internal validity. We computed H scores and Rho reliability to assess the tool's internal consistency and reliability. Lastly, we conducted t-tests for different subgroups based on child protection institution, age, and gender to draw conclusions regarding the tool's external validity. We expected higher scores for RvdK cases instead of AMHK cases because the RvdK has more elaborate participation policies. Then, we hypothesized higher scores for teenagers in contrast to younger children because child protection professionals report more difficulties with regard to the participation of younger children. Lastly, we anticipated higher scores for girls because professionals may believe that girls are more mature and relationship-oriented, due to gendered expectations, which might result in gender differences. If t-tests would indicate higher scores for these groups, that would support the external validity of the tool.

Results

The intercoder reliability of the tool is sufficient with Cohen's Kappa coefficients ranging between .63 and .93. Our MSA revealed a strong scale of 8 items (H= .70; item 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13) with a reliability of Rho = .89. Children who *did* participate seemed more often heard by professionals, while not all of them seemed to receive information about the child protection investigation. The MPAT seems externally valid with higher scores for RvdK cases, teenagers, and girls.

Conclusions

The MPAT seems reliable, internally valid, and externally valid. The finding that not all children receive information about child protection procedures seems problematic because the Convention on the Rights of the Child argues that receiving relevant information is a prerequisite for meaningful participation. This suggests that professionals might particularly need training in how they can inform children about child protection matters. We suggest that child protection policymakers and professionals use the MPAT to evaluate their participatory practices.

Participatory Learning and Action methods facilitate listening to children's perspective

Dr. Johanna Mahr-Slotawa (University Bielefeld)

I present some of the various Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methods that I applied in my research with children. From my experience I concluded that these methods facilitate, in a playful way, the researcher's ability to listen to children's perspective. In my presentation, I refer to the use of PLA methods in my Participatory Action Research, which I carried out with primary school children in Kenya, as part of a school health promotion programme. I used the PLA methods in this research to determine children's perspectives on how to realise their right to participate within a nationally implemented school health promotion programme in Kenya. Other aims of my use of PLA methods in additional researches included to develop or evaluate programmes jointly with children, to define with the children actions or research contents or to get to know children's interest.

The objective of my presentation is to introduce four of these PLA methods: Preference ranking, Web, Mapping and Road block method. I will give some general background information on PLA methods, describe the advantages as well as some of the challenges I experienced in using these methods to study children's perspectives. I expect my presentation to provide an understanding of the value of using PLA methods to study children's perspectives and explain the exact application of the four presented PLA methods. I present the advantages of using PLA methods with children to include: realising children's participation right; flexibility of methods; children being able to have fun, and the possibility of discussing and analysing complex subjects with the children in collaborative frameworks. The challenges I experienced in using these methods include: children find it difficult to understand some methods; not all children are involved equally, and facilitators need to be well-trained to execute PLA methods.

From the various experiences I had in using PLA methods with children, I conclude by underlining how these methods are valuable in studying children's perspectives. My presentation will contribute empirical evidence on how these PLA methods constitute new research approaches that amplify children's views.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN: INSIGHTS IN A NEW WORKING GROUP – Examples of using Participatory Learning and Action methods with children

Dr. Johanna Mahr-Slotawa (University Bielefeld)

Chairperson: Johanna Mahr-Slotawa (Dr. PH)

I present an example of Participatory Health Research conducted with children in Kenya (aged 7-14 years). The objective of the research was to improve the realization of children's right to participate within a school health programme (Mahr-Slotawa 2020a). A core value of each Participatory Health Research is the active involvement of the specific target group that the health intervention addresses.

I start my presentation by giving a brief introduction to the overall Participatory Health Research paradigm (ICHPR 2013). I include insight on the design of the Participatory Health Research that I conducted with the target group of primary school children in Kenya. This research design allowed us, as the research team, to gain first-hand experiences around our research objective of realizing children's right to participate. Essential was the application of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methods with the children (Mahr-Slotawa 2020b). Such methods, combined with Focus Group Interviews, facilitate in a playful way the research facilitators' ability to listen to children's perspectives. The PLA methods are, in addition, one of the various Participatory Research traditions from which Participatory Health Research originates (Chambers 1992).

The main purpose of my presentation is to demonstrate four of these PLA methods: Preference ranking, Mapping, Web and Road Block method. We applied the PLA methods in our research in Kenya with the aim of determining children's perspectives on how to realize their right to participate in the school health programme. In my past researches in other countries, I used PLA methods with the objective of developing and evaluating health programmes jointly with the children, to define with the children actions or research contents and to get to know children's interests (Mahr et al. 1995).

I expect my presentation to shed light on the value of using PLA methods to study children's perspectives and on the application of the four presented PLA methods. I present the advantages of using PLA methods with children to include: realizing children's participation right; flexibility of methods; children being able to have fun, and the possibility of discussing complex subjects in a collaborative framework. The challenges I experienced in using these methods include: children find it difficult to understand some methods; not all children are involved equally, and research facilitators need to be well-trained to execute PLA methods.

From the various experiences, I had while using PLA methods with children, I conclude by underlining how these methods are valuable in studying and understanding children's perspectives. My presentation will contribute empirical evidence on how these PLA methods constitute new research approaches that amplify children's views. It will thereby provide insight from the example of a Participatory Health Research conducted with children.

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Path to supervised visits: providing better support to children in foster care

Ms. Sarah C. Auger (Université de Montréal), Ms. Marie-Pierre Joly (l'Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté), Prof. Poirier Marie-Andree (Université de Montréal)

Background: Supervised visits represent a complex practice for caseworkers who have to deal with the suffering of the child, the parents and the foster parents, as well as dealing with the challenges associated with the context of supervised visits and the broader conditions of practice in the child protection services. To date, studies have mainly focused on the subjective experience of parents, foster parents and children. They have identified certain limits in the services offered to young people and their families, as well as challenges in the work of those who accompany children in this context. On the other hand, we know little about the professional practice of caseworkers during supervised visits and the strategies they use to support children in that setting.
Objective: This presentation will report the results of a research carried out as part of a Master's thesis. The objective of the research was to document, from their discourse, the professional practice of caseworkers who support children experiencing supervised visits with their parent(s) in the context of child protection services. More specifically, it aimed to better understand how they prepare and support children at different moments of supervised visits, as well as explore what concrete actions are taken in order to achieve those tasks. The guide to supervised visits developed by the *Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficultés* (University Institut IUJD) of the CIUSSS Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal (CIUSSS CSSMTL) will also be presented. This guide was designed in order to better support children in foster care experiencing supervised visits with their parent(s). The outcomes of using this clinical tool will be discussed.
Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 caseworkers from the CIUSSS CSSMTL. The interviews were subjected to a thematic analysis.
Results: Results reveal that the practice of accompaniment of the child in the context of supervised visits is built from an interaction between different factors such as the nature of the support offered, the caseworker's attitude and their understanding of the child's experience (in terms of general experience and needs). Overall, caseworkers reported using a diversified practice in order to respond to the particularities of the situations encountered and the needs identified in the children they support. The data analysis also brought out the theme of the place occupied by children in the youth protection system, in a context where practice tends to overshadow them. Elements related to the personal characteristics of the caseworkers and to the clinical and organizational aspects of the profession emerged from the interviews.
Discussion: This research provides a better understanding of the professional practice of caseworkers who accompany children in their supervised visits with their parent(s). It offers food for thought in order to develop a professional practice and clinical tools that better meet the needs of children in a way that makes sense for them. It also supports the relevance of taking more interest in the place of children in the youth protection services and in giving them a voice in future research.

Pathways for children and families' participation in the Italian P.I.P.P.I. programme

Dr. Serbati Sara (University of Padova), Dr. Marco Ius (University of Padova), Dr. Paola Milani (University of Padova)

Since 2011 the Italian Ministry of Welfare has started a collaboration with the University of Padua, for implementing an innovative intervention strategy to reduce child neglect and prevent out-of-home child placement (with children 0-14 y.o.), the Programme of Intervention for Prevention of Institutionalisation (P.I.P.P.I.). The programme, which is organized in a biannual path, was piloted in 10 Italian cities from 2011 to 2013. Then, six steps of scaling-up followed and were completed and two are in progress. The full implementation started in 2019 when P.I.P.P.I. became the principal method to fulfill the National Guidelines in Working with children and families living in vulnerable situations. Thus, P.I.P.P.I. has cumulatively involved approximately 4000 children and their families, and 8000 practitioners in more than 250 territories.

P.I.P.P.I. focuses on supporting children and families through multi-professional, holistic, and resilience-based interventions, in order to reduce child neglect (Lacharité, et al. 2006) and aims at responding to children's needs by a collective action (Serbati et al. 2016) fostering personal and familial resilience and also community capacity (Chaskin et al., 2001). Within the Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, the first main theoretical reference is the Multidimensional Model of the Child's World (CW) which is the Italian adaptation of the British Assessment Framework (Department of Health, 2005) used internationally, including Scotland and Québec. The CW provides professionals with a means of understanding the available resources and needs of each child and his/her family in a holistic way, taking social ecologies into account, as well as the interaction between various factors. The second one is the Participative and Transformative Evaluation method (PTE, Serbati & Milani 2013, Serbati, 2017) that besides showing whether the practice is effective, it is a mean of empowerment and social change (Shaw 2011). The PTE promotes families and children's participation along the steps of the evaluation process (referral, welcoming, assessment and planning, intervention and monitoring, conclusion). Several tools are used to empower families to make new decisions and experiment new actions enabling them to foster the children's development and their daily life. Tools are used by professionals to work together with families to identify both the strengths and the difficulties and co-plan the intervention. Thus, practitioners co-work and co-research with children, parents, teachers and other actors to furthering positive child developmental pathways. In realising the PTE, a process similar to a scientific inquiry is adopted in which thinking is developed (Dewey, 1933, 1938) by reflecting and negotiating meaning on data in order to justify choices and make decisions with children and with families.

Starting from a series of case studies, carried out through interviews, focus groups and meetings with key actors, the presentation will consider the P.I.P.P.I. effective processes in realizing children's and families' participation within the household context and the wider social ecology.

The results show the importance for practitioners and families to be inspired by the programme and co-creative solutions for giving space and voice to children and all the actors involved. The dialogue is key to assume new views and turn children's and families' voice into new decisions to be realized in the intervention. Finally, the results report the importance of P.I.P.P.I.'s commitment in creating participative arenas where participants act upon the programme proposals and collectively reinventing or adapting them to address individual and organisational needs. Families with practitioners, groups of practitioners, and researchers with practitioners are three communities that leverage P.I.P.P.I. to empower in the participants the capacity to reflect, to think, to make choices, in short, to develop new cultures of practice (Serbati et al., 2019).

Pathways to Children and Young People’s Participation in Child Protection Practice and Research: International Perspectives

Dr. Katrin Križ (Emmanuel College Boston), Dr. Mimi Petersen (University College Copenhagen)

This presentation is based on the findings of a co-edited volume currently in preparation entitled “*Pathways to Children and Young People’s Participation in Child Protection Practice and Research: International Perspectives*.” The overarching question that drives the book is what conditions are conducive to children’s and young people’s participation occurs in international contexts. The volume analyzes how children and young people, professionals in public child protection systems, and other organizations involved in protecting children from violence all over the globe promote children and young people’s participation in child protection practice and research. The book weaves together the work of over 20 contributors who work as practitioners or scholars in the area of child protection.

Objective: The main objective of this presentation is to present the main takeaways from the book that are grounded in the book’s nine empirical chapters. We will draw on the chapter findings to show how children’s participation occurs at the institutional levels through child-centric practices by children and youth and professionals working in public child protection systems and other organizations; at the cultural level through child-centric values, and at the individual level through children’s actions and interactions with their communities. At the individual level, children and young people have different experiences with participation in child protection depending on their social position, such as age, gender, ability, social class, sexuality, and ethnic, migrant, and national backgrounds.

Method: The editors of the volume employ content analysis to the empirical chapters of the book to delineate the various pathways to children and young people’s participation in child protection.

Results: We will first present the book’s overarching questions. Second, we will discuss the main findings pertaining to children and young people’s participation in the part of the book that analyzes how child protection systems create pathways to children’s participation. Third, we will present on the book chapters on innovative participatory programs and tools developed and implemented by professionals in child protection and other organizations. Fourth, we will discuss the main findings emerging from the chapters on program and system innovations initiated and implemented by children and youth themselves. Lastly, we will discuss the implications of our findings for child protection practice.

Patterns of adversity and post-traumatic stress among children adopted from care

Dr. Rebecca Anthony (Cardiff University), Dr. Amy Paine (Cardiff University), Prof. Katherine Shelton (Cardiff University), Ms. Emily Lowthian (Cardiff University), Ms. Meryl Westlake (Cardiff University)

Background

Children adopted from care are more likely to have experienced early adversity, but little is known about the impact of early adversity on later post-traumatic stress (PTS) symptoms.

Objective

To investigate sub-groups of adversity in a sample of adopted children and examine the association with later PTS symptoms.

Participants and setting

A study of British children adopted from care using social worker records (*N* = 374) and questionnaire-based longitudinal study of *n* = 58 children over 4-years post adoptive placement.

Methods

We used latent class analysis to identify subgroups of children based on commonalities in perinatal and post-natal adversity experienced prior to adoption and examined differences in PTS symptoms at 4-years post-placement between subgroups.

Results

Nearly one in five (19 %) children were in the clinical or borderline ranges for symptoms of PTS arousal, 14 % for PTS avoidance and 8 % for PTS intrusion. The 5-class solution fitted the data best, with one class characterized by children with a low probability of experiencing any adversity, one perinatal adversity class and three classes capturing different patterns of adversity. The multiple complex adversity class involving both perinatal and postnatal adversity had significantly higher symptoms of PTS avoidance and arousal than other sub-groups.

Conclusions

The prevalence and complexity of PTS symptoms among adoptive children highlights the need for effective interventions considering different profiles of early adversity.

Peer Research – Working Together to Achieve Positive Transitions from care.

Ms. Jade Ward (Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York), Ms. Jo Dixon (Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York), Ms. Amy Mook (Child Welfare Research Group, University of York)

Research evidence over the past three decades suggests that many young people leaving care face higher risk of disadvantage and social-exclusion throughout adult life. Disruption through placement movement, a lack of support networks, obstacles to education and career opportunities and isolation post-care can result in care leavers struggling to cope when transitioning to independent adulthood.

Research also shows that young people can feel disempowered during the transition from care. Some feel they do not have choice in when they leave or have sufficient say in where they move to. Initiatives introduced in England in recent years aim to increase choices and decision making for young people, both in terms of having more say about their own lives and the development of services that support them. These include pathway planning, children in care councils and care leaver forums, all of which provide platforms for young people to have their voices heard.

Alongside this, research with care leavers, including that carried out by researchers from the University of York, has served to provide a platform for young people to share their views about their experiences and what support they need. Increasingly, research is making use of techniques that not only enable young people to voice their perspectives but also to influence the focus of the research and the interpretation and dissemination of findings. This includes the use of participatory approaches, such as peer research and co-production, where young people take a more active role in the research process.

This presentation will provide an overview of how our research is using peer research methodology, working with young people making their transition to independent living, across two innovation projects. Both projects were developed with a co-production element, ensuring young people have a voice in not only their transition but also in the support they receive.

One aims to create a young person-led project for those leaving care It is based on co-operative principles and is run with and for ten young people making the transition from care. The project delivers a bespoke support package and learning programme alongside project facilitators to assist the young people in sustaining their first post-care home.

The second project works with young people leaving residential care. It offers a support package, involving key workers, mental wellbeing services and opportunities to develop independent living skills, for young people aged 16-21. The aim of the project is to work alongside young people to plan their transition and provide them with the opportunity to stay close and connected to those important to them, including residential homes, family and friends.

This presentation will focus on the peer research methodology and the journeys of some of our peer researchers, including there participation in research. Peer research recognises that young people are experts by experience, focusing on commonality instead of difference, which brings together a combination of experiences and learning from each other to have a stronger voice. Peer research allows young people to learn new skills that are transferable into their adult journey, providing them with the opportunity to broaden their experiences, gain work experience and be involved in a specialist area that is usually inaccessible to the majority of care leavers.

Peer Researchers from both projects played a vital role in bringing young people's voices and actions to the evaluations; their participation has aided the setup, shaping and delivery to ensure that the research meets the needs of care leavers. This presentation highlight's how young people can play a key role within academic research, including the benefits and challenges of working with this method, covering the topic of co-production and participatory research.

Perceptions and experiences of Child and Youth Care Workers in South Africa with regards to affording children (in care) Managed Opportunities for Independence.

Ms. Joyce Hlungwani (University of Johannesburg)

The challenges associated with transitioning from residential care to independent living are widely acknowledged in care-leaving literature. There is also increasing attention to the resilience processes that enable young care-leavers to cope and thrive in the face of adversity. Despite an acknowledgement that resilience is a process that develops over time, and that the environment in which children grow contributes to the development of resilience, there is limited research that looks at how social work practice, particularly in-care programmes, develop young people's resilience while they are still in care. This paper presents the experiences of Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCW) with regards to affording young people in care, managed opportunities for independence and how this contributes to the resilience of young people. The research employed a qualitative, grounded theory methodology with the aim of exploring the contribution of managed opportunities for independence (MOI) in building the resilience of young people in care. Nine CYCW were purposively sampled from various Child and Youth and Care Centres in South Africa. Findings indicate that exposure to opportunities for independence contributes to the development of resilience of young people who grow up in care. It is concluded that in-care programmes should be designed in a manner that allows young people to exercise responsibility and independence, as a way of building their resilience and thus preparing them for life after care.

Permanently Progressing? Involving young children in a large mixed methods study

Dr. Maggie Grant (University of Stirling (Scotland UK)), Dr. Helen Whincup (University of Stirling)

This paper reports on the use of ‘play and talk’ sessions with a small subsample of young children living in kinship, foster and adoptive families in Scotland, as part of a large-scale mixed methods longitudinal study. Many children in the care system may be ‘legally’ secure in their placements with permanent carers or adoptive parents, but this does not necessarily equate to feeling secure. Legislation in Scotland underpinning social work practice makes it clear that children should be enabled to express a view in decision making, dependent on age and understanding. In practice, children’s views are not always sought, particularly those of younger children. This research provided an opportunity to hear about children’s lives in their own words.

We carried out ‘play and talk’ sessions with 10 children aged between three and eight years. The interviewer and child started an activity together or the child chose something to play with. Conversations moved between the immediate activity and discussing topics such as family, school and holidays. Children’s perspectives on four areas were thematically analysed: *becoming a family*, *being a family*, *connections with birth family*, and *school, nursery and friendships*.

The findings were then compared with data from the full study dataset, including interviews with 20 carers/adopters, questionnaires about 400 children completed by carers/adopters and social workers, and focus groups with 160 decision-makers (mainly from social work and the Children’s Hearings system, where decisions are made by lay people about the safety and well-being of children and young people). The data were collected in 2016/2017 during Phase 1 of the *Permanently Progressing?Building secure futures for children in Scotland* study, which is investigating decision making, permanence, progress, outcomes and belonging for children who became ‘looked after’ when they were aged five and under.

This paper focuses on three areas where children’s perspectives revealed new insights and alternative interpretations of data gathered from adult participants:

- First, the value of ostensibly small day-to-day acts and habits that build and bolster a sense of being a family. Children’s accounts highlighted tangible signifiers of belonging, such as getting to choose wallpaper or knowing who sits where in the car.
- Second, the different focal points for children, carers/adopters and professionals at the point a child moves to live with the new family, from the story that gets told (and re-told) of the move, to the sometimes impenetrable codes of social work language. Related to this is the risk of children getting ‘lost’ from view in complex decision making systems.
- Third, the emotions and skills involved in sharing information about children with prospective carers and adopters, and within families. Alongside examples of clear and sensitive communication were stories of gaps and ambivalence. This was not a static picture but a varied and on-going process, involving past experiences, present circumstances and anticipation of future questions.

The paper also discusses potential obstacles and limitations in involving young children in research. Overall, however, the findings highlight the value of seeking young children’s perspectives to help ask questions of and better understand data from multiple sources within the same study. Even on a small scale, children can make an outsized contribution and ensure that researchers do not overlook important details.

Perspective of children and youths form South East Europe in their role in challenging perceived social and gender norms impacting school related gender-based violence

Mrs. Marina Trbus (Brave phone for Children Croatia), Mrs. Laura Wright (International Institute Child Rights and Development), Prof. Ivana Zečević (University of Banja Luka)

Researchers and international child protection workers recognize that school offers an important protective role for children and for communities, as well as acts as a potential site of violence. Conversely, it can also be a space where violence occurs and protections are eroded. Child protection [and safeguarding] has historically tried to 'save' children from difficult or harmful circumstances and in the process has often failed to recognize children's agency or respect their participation rights" (Collins & Wright, Forthcoming, p.8). Children are highly competent and agentic beings with expertise to contribute to their own safety and well-being in partnership with adults, yet they are often disempowered and prevented from being engaged in transforming child safeguarding and protection systems (Duncan, 2019). In practice, child participation is too often reduced to rhetoric (Naker, Mann & Rajani 2007), with the result that we are left with adult-centric implementation of children's rights and protection in particular.

Given the particular socio-historical development of many Eastern European countries, the move to new child protection and child safeguarding regimes has been slow, for instance in the move from socialism to capitalism and in moving away from the reliance on institutional care (Zouev, A. & Unicef, 2016; Anghel, Herczog, Dima, 2013). In Eastern Europe, in particular there is a need to safeguard Roma children against violence and discriminatory segregation including within the school setting (Erjavec, 2001; Rostas, & Kostka, 2014). However, there is a paucity of rigorous academic literature and/or case study analysis of the roles these possibly effective practices play (or do not play) in children's meaningful participation in safe school environments.

Out of this mixed methodology study, with a participatory "qualitatively driven approach" (Hesse-Bibber & Johnson, 2015) researchers used a variety of research instruments with groups of children and adults, to gain a deeper exploration of children's lives and their role in challenging perceived social and gender norms impacting school related gender-based violence. Research involved children aged 13 to 18 and to them important adults (Parents, School and CPS professionals, Community and other relevant actors). We highlight that the regional research took place in 8 countries (Moldavia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Croatia). This presentation itself will provide an overview of the overarching concept, methodology, and findings with particular focus on Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This approach allowed to have stronger indications of social norms and practices and enables clearer direction for future programming and policy, than a process that reaches larger numbers of participants with less depth. As a participatory methodology, the focus of the instruments was to provide children and adults with a framework within which to explore the violence that is taking place in children's lives. Out of this research space was created for children to name what they perceive as violence, explain its prevalence and its impact in their daily lives, discuss their attitudes towards violence as well as the attitudes of their peers, parents and the broader community, and the impact of these attitudes. In addition, strategies for prevention and support services as well as for social change, especially for vulnerable groups of children and youths, were identified for further implementation and follow up research.

Perspectives of young people and staff members in residential living groups during the COVID-19 pandemic on everyday life matters and participation in living groups

Dr. Claudia Equit (TU University Dortmund), Mrs. Antonia Finckh (Techniche Universität Dortmund)

Objectives

The planned lecture provides insights into everyday life matters of young people in living groups during the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany. The aim is to examine the everyday experience of young people in these living groups, potentials, as well as their stress factors. The findings are based on data collected in the qualitative research project “Participation in organizational cultures of residential youth care”, funded by the German Research Association (DFG). For that, everyday experiences before and during the pandemic will be compared. In addition, possibilities of participation and voicing complaints are examined as well. To get extensive insights into the participation and complaint processes, the perspectives of young people and the staff both are examined.

Methods

The sample of the qualitative research project includes ten cases. Every case consists of group discussions and interviews with young people and staff members as well as expert interviews with the senior managers. All cases were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and fully evaluated. The aim is to show of how the everyday life and participation of young people and staff members have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is further possible to reconstruct changes in the everyday experiences, potentials, and burdens prior to and after the COVID-19 pandemic in six cases, based on cases collected before the pandemic within the context of the project “Participation in organizational cultures in residential youth care”. All cases were analyzed using the documentary method (Bohnsack 2014).

Results

The results reveal the potentials, burdens, and changes in the everyday life of young people in living groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. It further reveals changes concerning the participation and complaint processes during these times. The focus of this study is on coping mechanisms for everyday life, on restrictions and determining helpful processes from the perspectives of professionals and young people. Since comparable group discussions were already led in six cases prior to the pandemic, it is also evaluated whether and to what extent existing subcultures in the living groups changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results indicate of coping strategies and potentials as well as the limits when it comes to shaping the everyday life in living groups. In addition, possible obstacles in participation and complaint processes in the facilities during the pandemic are presented.

Placing Juvenile Delinquents in Child Protection Secure Units : a labeling analysis

Mrs. sabrina bourget (Université Laval)

In residential settings for youth in Quebec, Canada, there's two laws dividing youth into two distinct group which are young delinquents and youth placed for their own protection. Those two groups are usually placed into different units, but this isn't the case when they have to be placed in secure care units because they're deemed a danger to others or themselves. This paper aims to explore this concerning situation and its impacts on intervention and social climate in secure units, drawing on data gathered from a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with 10 practitioners working in secure care units. Findings suggest that mixing youth in secure units can generate ambiguity for practitioners with regards to the diverging objectives of intervention. Group intervention is also considered more complex and less effective depending on the heterogeneity of youth's needs and clinical profiles. For adolescents, being remanded with juvenile delinquent and youth with self-harming behavior is experienced as highly destabilizing, from the perspective of practitioners. Indeed, adolescents often have to witness physical coercive interventions, which can be really stressful. An analysis from the labeling theory perspective showed that this situation is highly stigmatizing for youth placed for their own protection. Practitioners, by treating all youth equally despite their degree of responsability in their own placement. Being treated like young delinquant while not having commited any official crime can lead youth placed for their own protection to adopt the deviant labeling and to act accordingly with this new label. These implications are discussed.

Planning and supporting long-term foster care: how can the concept of permanence be represented in systems and made meaningful for children?

Dr. birgit larsson (Lecturer in Social Work, Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia), Prof. Gillian Schofield (Emeritus Professor of Child and Family Social Work, Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia), Prof. Elsbeth Neil (Professor of Social Work, Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia), Ms. julie young (Senior Research Associate, Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia)

Background to this study

The concept of permanence has remained the focus of child welfare policy in the UK, but continues to present many challenges in principle and in practice. Long-term foster care has been one of the permanence options available for children in state care since the 1980s, but it was only in 2015 that it was officially defined by the Government in new care planning regulations and guidance for England. Research, including studies led by Schofield, had informed this development, which aimed to improve outcomes for children by requiring local authorities to establish procedures to assess, match and support children and long-term foster families, and to identify children in long-term foster care placements in their annual report to the Department for Education (DfE). In order for children to feel less stigmatised and subject to bureaucracy, they also allowed for the frequency of social work visits and formal review meetings to be reduced in settled placements. Systems are required to be in place to consult children, as well as foster and birth families, at each stage of planning and decision making.

The University of East Anglia Centre for Research on Children and Families was funded by the Nuffield Foundation (2018-20) to investigate the implementation of the 2015 long-term foster care regulations and guidance. The project was extended to 2021 because of the pandemic.

Aims

The project aimed to answer some key questions:

- What are the numbers, characteristics and pathways of children reported to be in long-term foster care placements (including those with family and friends) in each local authority in England compared to other children in care or leaving care for other permanence options (i.e. reunification to birth family, special guardianship, adoption)?
- Have local authorities introduced procedures and practices that conform with the permanence definitions, principles and requirements of the long-term foster care regulations and guidance (2015), including appropriate consultation with children and families?
- Which aspects of the long-term foster care regulations and guidance (2015) are perceived to be helpful and which may need to be reviewed?

Methods

The research design combined quantitative and qualitative methods:

- Analysis of the national (DfE) data on the characteristics of children in recorded long-term foster care placements since 2015 and their pathways, compared with other children remaining in care or leaving care for other permanence options.
- A survey of all English local authorities regarding their long-term foster care procedures and practice to achieve permanence, including consulting children and families. Responses were received from109 (74%) local authorities and included their views on the implementation of the new regulations and guidance.

- Interviews with 40 service managers from a selected sample of 30 local authorities with different profiles, procedural systems and practice with children and families.

Findings

(Interim at this stage – findings will be available for the conference presentation)

- The profile of long-term foster care has been raised by these regulations and guidance, but there is a significant variation between local authorities in their practices and in the rates of children who are reported to be in long-term foster care.
- There is also a significant variation in local authority attitudes to long-term foster care as a legitimate permanence option, which may affect practice in planning for permanence, including involving children and their foster and birth families in decision making.

This paper will report on all aspects of the study to focus attention on the importance of long-term foster care practice and of implementing permanence policies in a meaningful way for children who remain within the care system and need to have a sense of belonging in their foster families as well as birth families.

Post-secondary education planning for young people in out-of-home care: A case-study from Victoria, Australia.

Dr. Andrew Harvey (La Trobe University), Ms. Naomi Tootell (La Trobe University), Dr. Jacqueline Wilson (Federation University of Australia), Dr. Philip Mendes (Monash University), Dr. Iain Matheson (Research Centre for Better Outcomes for Fostering and Residential Care)

There are currently around 60,000 young Australians living in formal, statutory out-of-home care, including foster, kinship and residential care. Victoria is one of the largest states in the country, by population, with around 12,000 young people living in care, and approximately 500 young people transitioning from care each year. While the data is lacking, the evidence that does exist suggests that very few Australian care leavers go on to university, far fewer than the 40 per cent of 25-39 year olds in the general population. Overall, care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group, and many experience high levels of homelessness, incarceration and poverty. Improving the emphasis on education planning and pathways for young people in care and those transitioning from care could dramatically improve rates of post-secondary education while at the same time contributing to lasting cultural change within the welfare and education sectors.

According to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children Indicators, more than 40 per cent of young people in care aged 15-17 years did not have a leaving care plan in 2018, despite this being a mandatory requirement (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). For those young people who do have a leaving care plan, previous research has found that such plans are typically not holistic, future-oriented, well-resourced, recorded, analysed, or evaluated, and that the young person's voice is either absent or marginalised (Harvey, McNamara and Andrewartha 2014). Building on this research, our project explored the transition planning process for young Victorians in care, with a particular focus on education planning. The research included discourse and content analysis of key planning documents, and thematic analysis of 21 semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders, including representatives from government departments, welfare agencies, Indigenous organisations and peak bodies.

Interviews explored the accountabilities of carers, social workers, educators, and related staff, and the extent to which children in care are actively involved in the formulation of postsecondary education planning. Through the interviews we sought to understand the existing formal planning processes, and to identify the major barriers to, and opportunities for, effective education planning.

Our findings revealed substantial differences between theoretical implementation and reality; a need for transition planning to be considered within the broader policy context, including the proposed extension of state support for some care leavers through to the age of 21; and the need for a stronger emphasis on postsecondary education. Moreover, we found that when young people were involved in their own planning, many were typically only one voice among many, inadequately informed about postsecondary pathways and options, not well guided on the process and implications of the planning, and surrounded by a culture of low expectations, with welfare prioritised above education needs, and 'independence' being considered the primary (short-term) objective. Interviewees noted that education was typically considered a second order priority rather than a central concern and protective factor in itself.

While the project focused on Victorian planning practices, many of our findings have implications for other international jurisdictions. Providing agency to young people in education and transition planning processes requires a shift from paternalistic practices and unrealistic assumptions to deeper consideration of voice, agency, authenticity, and power structures. Effective planning also requires a change in narrative from simplistic notions of 'independence' to more realistic understandings of interdependence, and from short-term political objectives to consideration of longer term outcomes for those in care. We conclude with recommendations to empower young people within their own postsecondary education and transition planning processes.

Practices of child participation in European programmes for children and families - My Visits Book. A tool for improving contact visits in foster care

Ms. Lucía González-Pasarín (University of Malaga), Dr. Isabel M. Bernedo (University of Malaga), Dr. Maria D. Salas (University of Malaga)

The purpose of this communication is to present *My Visits Book*, an educational tool used as part of our psychoeducational intervention program *Visits: A space for family development*. The program is aimed at birth families and non-kinship foster families, although children in foster care and their social workers are indirect beneficiaries. This study was funded through the research project *Application of a psychoeducational intervention program to improve visits between foster children and their biological families* (Reference EDU2016 77094-P).

My Visits Book is designed to be used by children in foster care. It offers them an opportunity to share with their birth family information about their day-to-day life with the foster family. Likewise, they may use the book to share with their foster family, memories and experiences from their life before being taken into care. The child is helped by both families in this process. Thus, during contact visits, the biological parent helps the child to remember things from when they lived together, and also brings news about other family members who the child knows. For their part, the foster family is encouraged to help the child put into words the things that he or she would like to tell the birth family regarding what has happened since the last visit. This information can be shared in various ways, such as through photographs, drawings or letters.

As an educational tool, *My Visits Book* is a means of achieving goals related to all parties involved in the foster care process. For children, the book is a way of organizing their personal and family story into a coherent narrative. For the birth family, it is an opportunity to keep track of their child's daily life in foster care. As for the foster family, the book serves as an aid to communication both before and after visits, and thus it can help to prepare the child for contact with the birth family. In this respect, the book also encourages collaboration between the two families. Indeed, some of the families who are participating in the program have got to know one another through the photographs and drawings shared using the book.

In conclusion, *My Visits Book* can provide researchers and social workers with a better understanding of the child's perspective on contact visits and foster care, since all those involved in the process, and especially the child, contribute to its content. As a result, this educational tool may also be used to evaluate the psychoeducational intervention program of which it forms a part.

Predictive Analytics in Child Welfare Decision Making - Exploring Machine Learning Strategies to Predict Running Away from Foster Care

Dr. Kelly Stepura (OmniCare Institute)

Objectives:
The proliferation of extensive databases supports the application of new analytic methods, such as machine learning, that can be utilized in addition to traditional statistical methods. Models created using these approaches can analyze larger, more complex datasets with faster, more accurate results than traditional statistical approaches. The study applies machine learning approaches to historical data to predict the likelihood that a newly admitted foster youth will run away while in care.

In addition to the immediate safety risks to the youth, the harmful impact of running away on a youth's time in care is well-documented. Furthermore, these events negatively impact all others involved in the youth's care. Running away also results in high costs for foster care agencies through its association with placement disruption, foster home closures, and even staff turnover.

Machine learning models created using data gathered from foster youth previously in our care can be applied to the issue of running away to predict which youth are likely to run away in the future, in the hopes of improving the experience of youth who will be in our care in the future. Thus, this work is intended to be of practical use to agencies, while it is also anticipated that agencies and researchers could use the approach outlined in the study for similar purposes.

Method:
The administrative data used for the study were collected from a Tennessee agency providing treatment foster care. Treatment foster care (TFC) is out-of-home care by foster parents with specialized training to care for children and adolescents with significant emotional, behavioral, or social issues. All potentially relevant variables known at admission were included in the analysis, as were a variety of transformations of each variable. This included youth demographic information, case factors, and placement history, as well as items included in the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS). The CANS is used to identify the needs and strengths of children, adolescents, and their families. Initially, traditional statistical approaches (e.g., cluster analysis and logistic regression) were applied to the data with inadequate results. Machine learning analytical strategies were then employed.

Results:
During the presentation, statistics related to the final machine learning model predicting whether youth would or would not run away will be discussed. These include the test sample classification accuracy rate as well as a review of the variables that were the strongest contributors to the model. The importance of establishing pragmatic thresholds to further individualize the model's predictive results to this particular agency based on the agency's acceptance of or aversion to risk will be examined.

Conclusions:
While policies and procedures for caseworkers after a youth runs away are clear, a dearth of information is available to guide workers in preventing runaway events altogether. In providing workers with feedback on the likelihood of a runaway event, we can equip them to intervene and potentially avoid the runaway event, circumventing the negative impacts of running away. For example, these findings could be incorporated into agency processes to support decisions such as resource allocation, service provision, and treatment planning. Future research should explore the use of machine learning techniques with other foster care datasets and other foster care outcomes.

Predictive Analytics in Child Welfare Decision Making - Sensitivity and Specificity of Screening Decisions in Ontario Child Welfare

Dr. Jill Stoddart (University of Toronto), Dr. Kate Schumaker (University of Toronto)

The screening decision is one of the most important that child protection agencies make; it is this decision that initiates a child protection investigation for those families screened in, and can set the stage for further, more intensive involvement. In Canada, the province of Ontario has the highest incidence of investigations per 1,000 children in the population, without a correspondingly higher rate of substantiated maltreatment, suggesting that the system in Ontario may have a low threshold for screening in families for investigation. The Child Welfare System in Ontario has been under significant public criticism over the past few years. A number of child death inquests have been highly publicized, while the cost of providing child welfare services has continued to increase. This has contributed to a crisis in confidence – do we do to much or too little? When risk thresholds that are set too low it can over-burden a child welfare system resulting in significant strain on limited and shrinking resources, while a risk threshold that is too high can result in harm to children, including death. To explore this issue further, we examined the risk threshold of two child welfare organizations, serving distinctly different communities, in the Province using sensitivity/specificity analysis. This analysis was then used to facilitate critical reflection of current practice related to the decisions about which families are investigated.

Based on methods developed by Mansell et al., data were drawn from both agency's information systems, based on an entry cohort, ie all cases referred during a period of time, using the first referral in the fiscal year as the "index: referral. examine the first referral or 'spell' per family. Each case was tracked for 12 months to investigate the sensitivity and specificity of the referral disposition decision. Four groups were derived from this analysis: True Positive (screen in and verified within 12 months); True Negative (screen out and not verified within 12 months); False Positive (Screen in and not verified); False Negative (screen out and verified within 12 months). Additional data were extracted to explore factors associated with the four groups, including the primary reason for referral, the referral source, and the worker making the screening decision.

The analysis revealed that for both organizations the sensitivity of the screening decision was high (Se=93%,96%), and the specificity was low (Sp=43%, 39%). While the false negatives for both organizations was very low (FN =2.7%, 2%) the False Positive for both organizations were high (FP=36%,30%). Upon further exploration both organizations found that factors associated with false positives included referrals from school personnel and/or allegations of physical abuse/inappropriate discipline.

Presenters will provide examples of how the results were used to facilitate discussions at an organizational level about the organization's risk threshold and whether service responses fit the presenting issues faced by families referred to each organization. The fear and anxiety regarding false negative decisions appeared to be driving each organizations risk threshold down, yet only 2.7% and 2% of cases respectively fell within this false negative grouping. They will discuss how the data provided guidance for staff charged with the screening decisions to think critically about the cases that they screen in and lead to changes in screening thresholds. Each will share examples of how data provided the foundation for the development of strategies to implement change in organizational practice as well as the organizations' work with other systems to support the needs of vulnerable children and families.

Predictive Analytics in Child Welfare Decision Making – Screening Threshold Analysis: a US example

Prof. John Fluke (University of Co), Ms. Rebecca Wilcox (Children and Families, Minnesota Department of Human Services), Ms. Aubrey Kearney (Indiana Department of Child Services), Ms. Nikki Kovan (Children and Families, Minnesota Department of Human Services), Ms. Heather Kestian (Indiana Department of Child Services), Dr. Elisabeth Wilson (Indiana Department of Child Services)

Background

Defining decisional outcomes (true positives, true negatives, false positives, and false negatives) in child welfare is extremely challenging. Principally this is due to the constraints imposed by decision making under uncertainty, uncertainty which increases as children and families are exposed to decisions further along the Child Welfare Decision Making Continuum (Baumann, et al. 2011). Unknown error levels in Decision Making both false negatives and false positives have the potential to impact children in the short and long term.

In 2015, the Minnesota Governor's Task Force on Child Protection delivered a list of recommendations intended to make improvements in the child welfare system. Several recommendations surround improvements in intake, screening, and safety response. As part of that recommendation, the screen in rate was perceived as being to high (approx. 40%). The child safety and permanency division, along with other child welfare stakeholders, assessed and modified their recommended screening thresholds for assignment and pathway decision making. Unlike Minnesota, in Indiana the rate at which referral are screened in for investigation are over 70% and anecdotally investigative staff, supervisors and the community are concerned that too many referrals are being screened in. As data-driven child welfare systems, Minnesota and Indiana elected to conduct analysis of the impact on child safety with the implementation of these thresholds. Specifically, will these changes lead to improved or worsened error rates for screening of child maltreatment?

Methods

The framework for analysis is based on Continuous Quality Improvement principles and the data are intended to support a Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle. To accomplish this the States collaborated with the US Capacity Building Center for States to prepare and conduct a Screening Threshold Analysis (STA). The method for this type of approach originates with the analysis of New Zealand screening policies described by Mansell, Ota, Erasmus & Marks (2011). The method involves developing criteria for establishing decisional conditions for the screening decision (true positives, true negatives, false positives, and false negatives). From an administrative data perspective, a key system element is the degree to which the information system is capable of identifying children referred previously. Once initial criteria were developed, Minnesota's and Indiana's administrative data were constructed to produce estimates of numbers and proportions of the four decisional conditions. Data were analyzed quarterly and sub-jurisdictionally to identify trends over time in rates and patterns across counties and regions.

Results

The preliminary analysis revealed considerable variation in rates of screening across jurisdictions. For example, in Minnesota ranging from a low of roughly 20% and a high approaching 50% as of 2017. With respect to decisional conditions through the period of analysis, the rate of true positives ranged from 25% to nearly 30%, true negatives ranged between 42% and 48%, false positives ranged between 22% and 23%, and false negatives ranged between 4% and 7%.

Conclusions

Of particular concern are false negative errors (not acting when one should have) given the normal concerns of the staff and communities. In jurisdictions with comparatively high rates of screened in referrals, the proportion of false positives were greater, but rates of false negatives remained relatively unchanged. Next steps involve more detailed level analysis and incorporation of the STA into Continuous Quality Improvement methodology including the use of predictive analytic models. We will provide examples of the implemented changes in screening thresholds, and describe the process of developing decisional criteria. Presenters will discuss facilitators and barriers to this process as well as lessons learned from close examination of the data around this decision point.

Predictive Analytics in Child Welfare Decision Making- How Machine Learning Can Automate the Rating of Evidence Based Model Fidelity

Dr. Michael Tanana (Lyssn)

In the past decade, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) have approached human performance on problems like speech recognition, image identification, and question answering. Many tasks that were once the domain of skilled humans (e.g., transcription) can now be performed by AI models trained on large datasets. In the United States, the recent passage of the Families First and Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) now requires the monitoring of fidelity for evidence-based programs delivered in child welfare settings. To robustly meet this requirement, fidelity monitoring will need to massively scale up, which is not possible with traditional, human-focused fidelity evaluation. In this talk we will describe a machine learning / AI system that can rate adherence to motivational interviewing with similar performance to human raters, using only an audio recording of a treatment session. This system can record and manage sessions for therapists and counselors, provide a transcript of the session, identify the roles of each speaker and score adherence to the Motivational Interviewing Skill Code (MISC) and the Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity (MITI)). In the past, the ability to rate adherence to evidence based treatments was expensive and rare, making it difficult or practically infeasible to regularly give feedback on counselor skills. However, using machine learning methods, counselors can receive feedback on virtually every session that they perform, allowing for the possibility of ongoing skill improvement. One of the new challenges that a system like this presents is that, given the new abundance of skill-based feedback, we need to teach providers and supervisors how to effectively consume and improve from this wealth of data. We will describe some of the implementation methodology for training and enabling users of our platform. In addition, we will discuss the machine learning methodology that enabled this feedback system, including the major advances in Natural Language Processing (NLP) and deep learning models. Finally, we will describe our collaboration with states and localities to use this system to monitor fidelity in real-world settings, including meeting the requirements of FFPSA, opioid treatment clinics and college counseling training centers as well as the challenges of providing feedback to counselors and clinicians from a machine.

Predictors of mental health of children in State care: Results from wave 1 of a longitudinal survey of children in State care in England through the Covid-19 pandemic

Mrs. Dinithi Wijedasa (University of Bristol), Dr. Yeosun Yoon (University of Bristol), Ms. Florie Schmits (University of Bristol), Dr. Sarah Harding (University of Bristol), Ms. Rachel Hahn (University of Bristol)

Background: At any given time in England, there are around 80,000 children being looked after by the State (also referred to as 'children in care'). More than 60% of these children are taken into State care due to experiences of severe maltreatment such as abuse or neglect. Consequently, being taken into care is an 'intervention' for this vulnerable group of children, with the expectation that State care will then ameliorate or stabilise their mental health. Despite this, numerous research studies indicate that mental health concerns in this vulnerable child population is high, with 50% of children in State care having a diagnosable mental health concern, when compared to 12% of children in the general population. Furthermore, although children in care constitute only 0.6% of the child population in England, they account for a disproportionate 10% of referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Despite this evidence of high prevalence of mental health need, there is a dearth of knowledge on the longitudinal patterns of mental health of children in State care in England.

Aim and Method: The aim of this study is to contribute to our understanding of how mental health of children in care varies over time and to explore how these patterns of mental health are influenced by the developmental context of children and young people in care. This will be achieved though: (1) secondary analyses of longitudinal, national-level administrative data on children in care and (2) a longitudinal survey of children in care in local authorities, which will provide supplementary data to the national level data to enable analyses of *how* children's developmental context influences the mental health patterns of children in care.

This paper focuses on the wave 1 of the survey. The sampling frame was restricted to children aged between 11 years-18 years as children over the age of 11 years have been shown to be proficient in completing self-completion online surveys. The sample was also limited to children who have been in State care for at least one year, enabling exploration of the impact of specific contextual factors linked to the care experience, such as relationships with carers. Eighteen local authorities in England opted into the first wave of the survey and 930 children and young people responded.

Incorporating perspectives of children in care longitudinal research: The survey has enabled the collection of current and retrospective information on variables that are not available on the administrative dataset, whilst facilitating the inclusion of children's perspectives in the analyses. The results (n=930) will discuss a wide range of practice and policy relevant questions about children's mental health and the influence of factors linked to young people's developmental context such as their placement; school; people and support; contact; life story work; their thoughts and feelings about care; locus of control, health; and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, this paper will discuss the importance of children's voices in research; the advantages and drawbacks of using surveys to supplement longitudinal administrative data; the ethics of collecting data from children in care; and steps that could be taken to create a valid survey tool, for example, by collaborating with a 'children in care' participation group.

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Professional dilemmas and tools in child protection: The perspective on the perspective of the child

Ms. Rebecca Jung (School of Social Work, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland Valais), Prof. Peter Voll (School of Social Work, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland Valais)

As in other fields of Social Work, the dual mandate of assistance and control adds much to the complexity of professional action in child protection (Urban-Stahl 2018). The legitimating framing of child protection as protective action in the interest or in place of the child as a person with limited agency seems to put the balance clearly towards the *assistance*-end of the continuum. Yet, and despite a general preference for *assistance*, the „advocate-judge-dilemma“ (Nave-Herz 1977) continues to inform professional action, as becomes evident in situations where the professional is confronted with a (perceived) questioning of her/his authority. And it is particularly present, where professional action consists of evaluating-judging the child's condition and, as a result, of determining the necessity of protective measures.

In an ethnographic research project, we observe how an assessment tool – developed in Switzerland by university-based experts (Lätsch et al. 2015) and introduced in several child protection services in the German-speaking part of Switzerland – is adopted by assessing professionals and how its use is shaped by the organisational environment. For this presentation, our interest will focus on whether and to which extent the professionals' definition and causal attribution of the problem affect their perception of the child and, hereby, their mode of interaction with the child when it comes to identifying and considering the child's perspective. In a second step, we then will discuss the possible effects an assessment tool could have on *managing* the *advocate-judge-dilemma* as depicted above.

First results indicate that the tensions linked to the dilemma are diluted and dissolved in function of the case-specific circumstances as well as the individual characteristics of the child which allow or seemingly force the professionals to position themselves more towards the *advocate/assistance*- or rather *judge/control*-end of the *mandate/interaction*-continuum framing (problem) perceptions, attitudes and actions. In accordance, two different *modes of dilemma management* can be inferred, leading to two different approaches when it comes to identifying and considering the child's perspective. Interestingly, the *judge/control*-approach, which seems to be more *confrontation*-oriented and therefore less compatible with the proper identification and consideration of a child's perspective, originates in the perception of the child being capable of acting, thus being an actor in its own right. At the same time, the more *cooperation*-oriented *advocate/assistance*-approach, which appears to be more compatible with the inclusion of the child's perspective, builds on the notion of a child in need, incapable or less capable of acting as an actor in its own right. Such observations not only reveal some of the intricacies of the *concept* of *the child's perspective*; they equally hint at the need for developing adequate and reflectively monitored methods of moving between the *advocate/assistance*- and *judge/control*-end of the *mandate/interaction*-continuum, paralleled by what may be seen as a *child-as-child-devoid-of-agency/child-as-fully-responsible-actor*-continuum. In conclusion, we will point out how such methodological orientation could be fostered in a more systematic – and eventually tool-assisted – way: By systematically enabling a higher degree of professional distance with regard to the attributions and problem definition initially adhered to by the professionals, an adequate inclusion of the child's perspective could be furthered.

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Program for Preparing Children for Adoption© – PPCA: supporting children's voices in child protection

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There is a growing recognition of the importance of child preparation for adoption as a mandatory pre-placing activity, not only addressing child and adoptive parent's adaptation, but also as an ethical requirement and right of participation for the children.

Child participation is defined as the children's capacity to act deliberately, speak for oneself, and actively reflect on their social worlds, shaping their lives and the lives of others. It has been touted as one of the most salient aspects of the Convention on the Rights of the Child since it was adopted by the UN in 1989.

The ethics of child participation has gained traction specifically by focusing on the tension about children and youth's "best interests", balancing rights of participation, protection and notions of child´s responsibility. The views of children experiencing the process of being adopted, who are usually the most vulnerable members of society, are seldom taken in consideration, or even less encouraged.

In order to be able to formulate and express a view, children should be appropriately supported. They should be able to receive such guidance within a social context which is capable of communicating information effectively to them, receptive to hearing their voices, and supportive of their efforts to formulate their views. There has been a paucity of scholarly debate addressing these issues specifically within adoption studies.

In this presentation we will illustrate the PPCA – Program for Preparing Children for Adoption©–, a structured, manualized program, grounded within a constructivist perspective, aimed to support the transition of children into a new adoptive family, fostering better adaptation, openness of communication about adoption and overall well-being of the child, as it promotes the participation of the child in her preparation for adoption.

PPCA is designed to be led by child welfare professionals to support children over 3 years of age to whom adoption has been legally decided, and accompanies the child alongside the process of adoption, throughout ten progressive steps in direction to become part of a new adoptive family. The sessions are fully manualized (and published) presenting specific goals and activities (including a child workbook) targeting child participation in preparation for adoption.

In this presentation we discuss the relevance of specific activities suitable of improving the participation of the child in the process of preparation for adoption. PPCA seeks to ensure that children are listened to and supported in expressing their views, and that these views are taken into account in the decision-making process, therefore safeguarding their rights of participation.

We will conclude that the child should be at the centre of the adoption process, and should be given developmentally adequate opportunities to act as a fully engaged agent. In doing so, children would be closer to fulfil its participation rights and capable of voicing their needs in their own moral terms.

Program for Preparing Children on Reunification (PPCR): overall presentation and innovative construction method explanation

Ms. Diana Neves Teixeira (Centre for Psychology at University of Porto, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Prof. Isabel Narciso (Faculty of psychology, University of Lisbon), Prof. Margarida Rangel (Center for Psychology at University of Porto, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

The family reunification' success depends, among other factors, on the existence of a good and consistent preparation for this purpose. In addition to family preparation (see: Carlson et al., 2019; Farmer, 2014), the scientific research show the child preparation as predictor for success (see: Farmer, 2018; Jones and LaLibert, 2017), although this hasn't been further deepen. In Portugal there is a gap regarding to the practices empirically supported and to programs for the preparation of family reunification, so the professionals strive for more information and tools. The absence of orientations and tools leads to a great heterogeneity in intervention plans and the professionals immersed in the immediate challenges of their daily practice, sometimes, don't have time and availability to gather information that will improve their knowledge. In this context, have been identified a diversity of interventions for support to parents in reunification process but, at the time, we don't find any intervention program orientate to children in this process.

Given this situation, we were interested on developing a child preparation for family reunification' program based on the contributions of theorical knowledge and with that we aiming to improve the know-how of care workers. For this purpose, it was used the *logic model* proposed by McLaughlin, J., & Jordan, G. (2010), which is widely used in other fields where it is privileged to meet the needs of stakeholders and the *software release life cycle* with agile methodology. Employing these logics, that are based on continuous dialogue between researchers, practitioners and users (like children), we elaborate an innovative plan of program construction. In this method there was a constant articulation between theory knowledge and practice over time, with multimethod approach – qualitative and quantitative – at different steps. We started by collection of the professional' experiences in family reunification process with groups of care workers and the critical opinion about family reunification processes of experts in the field, through a qualitative study. After this, we put together the literature review knowledge with information collected of the qualitative study previous referred and create the early version of PPCR. This beta version of PPCR includes 4 intervention phases, namely Child Transition for Care, Child Preparation for Family Reunification, Child Transition of Care to Home and Support Post-reunification. Each of these phases have a several stages, activities to be applied with the child and as a whole are supported by theoretical assumptions and by guidelines for intervention. In next step we put PPCR in a trial phase for proof of concept, though the quantitative and qualitative studies. So, through an agile method, we collected the perspective of a children and care workers while they were trying out the program. On this step, we draw a training model and defined assessment' ways for measure the adhesion of professionals during program implementation. The exploration of user experience will allow us to find a set of information about the program, namely, satisfaction, feasibility and relevance that enriched the initial proposal and enable proceed to the next step, where this information's will be include.

In conclusion, we create a program for preparation child into reunification process, with permanent articulation between theory and practice to correspond directly to the needs of the contexts and to respect child' rights. So, this presentation will show the process used to the development and evaluate the implementation of the PPCR, as well to explain the contents of the program.

Promoting children's autonomy in alternative leaving care: results and impact of an European Project

Dr. Francisca Pimentel (APDES), Dr. Joana Antao (APDES), Ms. Joana Gomes (APDES), Mrs. Leonor Miranda (APDES)

Several gaps concerning the preparation of teenagers in foster care were identified at European level, particularly regarding autonomy, deinstitutionalisation and the development of common support methodologies and procedures aimed at young people leaving foster homes. The "OUTogether Project – Promoting Children's Autonomy in Alternative Leaving Care" was developed to address this question. Co-funded by the European Union, the Project aimed to improve ageing out of/leaving alternative care for all children and youth in 3 European States (Portugal, Bulgaria and Croatia).

Specifically, OUTogether aimed at: 1) Increasing national and transnational cooperation on the rights of the child policy in alternative care; 2) Increasing all children's life skills for independent living before children age out of/leave alternative care; and 3) Increasing integrated support for all children and youth after leaving alternative care. All proposed objectives were achieved through the involvement of public and private stakeholders from each of the 3 countries, namely Alternative Care Institutions and State institutions, Professionals, Researchers, NGOs and, specially, a group of 20 Careleavers' representatives (Youth expert group).

The External Evaluation points out that one of the most interesting findings under the relevance criteria of evaluation was the fact that, more than being aligned with already existing policies for which results the project might be concurring, OUTogether concurred for the design of inexistent policies, innovating at the level of production and provision of tools and recommendations. Throughout the project, several products and tools were developed at European level such as national and transnational recommendations on good practices and working methods for leaving care, training manual for the preparation of leaving care, guide for professionals' preparation for independent living, handbook for careleavers, mentorship program methodology and resource guide for careleavers.

The project has successfully directed actions to fill in and attenuate existent gaps and voids in the implementing countries concerning care/after care support and has supported the creation and reinforcement of a public agenda concerning independent living of youngsters coming from alternative care contexts, which is an area that is by default excluded from the framing legislation of foster care but directly entails with it, specially through the creation of national experts' groups with 56 participants and one European expert group emerged from the previous groups. Increased awareness about the importance of preparing children/youngsters for autonomy amongst the public opinion and 45 european decision-makers and to a higher extent near the foster care professionals and related professionals. Furthermore, it capacitated 243 alternative care professionals in the effective preparation for autonomy after care and originated institutional synergies. OUTogether was able to generate relevant peer-sharing practices, considered of utmost importance by the involved stakeholders, with the creation of a network of 90 professionals. At the final beneficiaries' level – youngsters leaving care - the project has involved them to a very significant extent, generating immediate and direct impact in their lives (77 youngsters), namely by facilitating networking and further support towards the transition to independent and autonomous living.

Promoting social and economic inclusion for young people leaving residential care in South Africa: evaluation of the role of formal mentoring

Dr. Mandi MacDonald (Queen's University Belfast), Prof. John Pinkerton (Queens University Belfast), Prof. Berni Kelly (Queen's University Belfast), Prof. Shanaaz Mathews (University of Cape Town), Dr. Montse Fargas (Queen's University Belfast), Ms. Jenna Lee Marco (University of Cape Town)

Context: In South Africa, an estimated 21,000 young people live in residential care. They typically have fractured family relationships, are placed in communities far from home, and often do not have the social support they need to negotiate the transition to adult life. The challenges associated with leaving care are compounded by experiences of inequality and social exclusion. South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world, particularly for youth. Significant disparities in opportunity and income are sharply focused in the lives of care leavers, and the absence of strong social networks contributes to continued poverty and disadvantage. South Africa has a goal to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty and promote inclusion for socially marginalised young people. This requires agencies to help children acquire social and life skills, and allocate a specialised person to facilitate their move to independence. Mentoring seems ideally placed to contribute to achieving those goals, however, most of the evaluative research is located in the Global North.

Objective: The project reported in this paper aimed to evaluate the potential of formal mentoring for addressing development goals of promoting equitable economic growth and social inclusion for socially marginalised care leavers in unequal societies.

This pilot project undertook a qualitative evaluation of the 'Transition to Independent Living' programme offered by SAYes, a Non-Governmental-Organisation, to young people living in and leaving residential care in Cape Town, as a case study of formal mentoring. The programme mentors are trained volunteers who offer one-to-one support, encouragement and opportunities for personal development and employability. The mentoring involves paired sessions for one hour per week over nine months.

Method: The research project was funded through the UK Government's Global Challenges Research Fund, and was a collaboration between two universities, one located in the Global North (Queen's University Belfast) and the other in the Global South (University of Cape Town). Researchers from both universities conducted individual semi-structured interviews with 35 care-experienced young people, 8 residential home staff, and two focus groups with 16 current mentors. Thematic analysis of the data was carried out through a collaborative approach between the two universities, facilitated by the use of Nvivo software. This allowed us to develop, collectively, a conceptual and explanatory account from the data.

Findings: In this paper we will reflect briefly on what we have learned about undertaking international collaborative research, and developing global dialogue on the issue of mentoring for care-leavers. We will present findings from interviews. We will give an overview of mentee's circumstances and the challenges they described in terms of:

- transitioning to adulthood
- experience of community-level adversity
- experience of personal adversity
- social and economic disadvantage
- fractured family relationships

We will report on evaluation of the key elements of the mentoring programme:

- forging a connection with their mentor
- engaging in positive relationships
- viewing their circumstances differently
- enriching their interests and opportunities
- their personal priorities for education, access to opportunity and personal wellbeing.

Conclusion: time-bounded formal mentoring can promote resilience by supporting emotional wellbeing, encouraging connection, and helping care experienced youth to navigate systemic, social and economic constraints. It can be an important component of support but is not a substitute for a well-resourced system of care for young people transitioning out of residential care.

PROMOTION OF CHILD WELFARE THROUGH LITERACY-WRITING: INTERVENTION EXPERIENCES IN MEXICO

Prof. Hilda Paredes-Dávila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Facultad de Psicología)

Various intervention experiences carried out during the pandemic will be presented to promote reading and writing in boys and girls (NN) from 6 to 12 years old and in their families, who belong to an official primary school, located south of the City of Mexico.In the presentation, the speakers, who are a teacher and six undergraduate and graduate students at the Faculty of Psychology of the UNAM, will share their proposals for the promotion of child well-being, in which they give a voice to the NN regarding the topics that interest them in their community; They also provide strategies to teachers and families about the reading and writing processes, making them aware of the need to listen to the interests and opinions of the children and giving priority to the functionality of written language through the knowledge and use of various textual structures.The first work carried out by Hilda Paredes Dávila describes the training of students in a Reading Room "Nibros" of the Faculty of Psychology of the UNAM to promote child well-being through reading.Pamela Flores describes an intervention proposal to develop phonological awareness to promote writing from a comprehensive linguistic approach in children from 6 to 8 years old who present low academic performance.The purpose of Mauricio García's intervention proposal is to promote the reading comprehension of different textual structures in NN of second grade of primary level.Tyra Oney Resendiz and Cecil del Prado present an intervention proposal based on gamification and on the presentation of information capsules to promote various reading skills in NN 10 to 12 years old.Based on the fact that reading is carried out in various academic areas, Ingrid Cecilia Holst presents an intervention proposal to promote reading comprehension in mathematics in children between 8 and 10 years of age.Finally, Judith Calvache's intervention proposal aims to promote parental involvement through reading stories to support caregivers in the education of children and adolescents, due to the closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

PROMOTION OF CHILD WELFARE THROUGH LITERACY-WRITING: INTERVENTION EXPERIENCES IN MEXICO - Promotion of child well-being through virtual reading skills workshops in adverse mexican context communities

Prof. Hilda Paredes-Dávila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Facultad de Psicología),
Ms. Cecil Paola Ramos del Prado (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Facultad de Psicología),
Ms. Tyra Oney Resendiz Ramírez (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Facultad de Psicología)

Pandemic has represented a challenge for the global population with repercussions in many contexts. One of the most affected has been education, in which the closure of institutes around the world has had a deep impact on millions of children and young people globally. Talking about Mexico, this situation emphasized the already existing inequalities of a sociocultural and economic context in deprived communities, where children are one of the most affected populations due to the radical changes they had to undergo in many aspects of their lives. The present intervention was developed by a pair of psychology students who are carrying out their professional practices at the Dr. Julián McGregor y Sánchez Navarro community center, belonging to the Faculty of Psychology of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). This center provides support to the community where it is settled, a population with problematic, deprived and violent characteristics which has suffered direct effects due to the pandemic. The main objective of these interventions was to promote reading skills in children who were studying 5th and 6th grade of elementary school. As specific objectives it was expected: A) To promote motivation towards reading and to develop communicative and social skills through gamification strategies B) To activate previous knowledge through informative capsules presented in multimedia files C) To form spaces where children can experience a momentary relief from the problems they go through day by day, to improve socialization and interaction between peers and to promote active reflection on the activities and readings we worked with. The workshops were all carried out through the digital video conferencing platform, Zoom. The materials used were books and short stories in a digital format, audio recordings, transcripts, informative capsules in multimedia format, the Motivation Profile to Read (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling and Mazzoni, 1995) in order to assess their level of motivation towards reading before and after the intervention, and some interactive platforms such as Aha Slides, Powerpoint, Genially, Canva and the social network Instagram. Sixteen weekly sessions were held per group, one hour each. Each of the sessions of the intervention program, as well as the total intervention, were designed under the introduction, development and closure scheme. In these, the children had the opportunity to interact with each other in a more flexible context compared to the formal classes provided by their school. As a result of the workshops, the products which were obtained from the children not only provided evidence of the development of the reading skills which were intended to be promoted, but also demonstrated that the participants well-being was being promoted by providing them some times per week a secure, free space in which they had the opportunity to interact with their peers in a flexible environment, express their feelings, thoughts and even insecurities and fears. It was noticeable that children were highly interested in attending every session of the virtual workshops with great excitement to participate in each of the proposed activities. The close approach that was held with children allowed to learn their personal and family background stories, some of them in a violent and deprived context, and even to detect those who needed specialized intervention in mental health matters. In conclusion, these spaces not only served to generate new methodologies around the school context, but also created environments which provide children the opportunity to coexist, develop, reflect in a secure and free way, and to form spaces which serve as a distraction from stress, uncertainty, difficult family and social environments and, chiefly, the secondary problems resulting from the pandemic and the current global crisis.

PROMOTION OF CHILD WELFARE THROUGH LITERACY-WRITING: INTERVENTION EXPERIENCES IN MEXICO - Promotion of parental involvement through reading in virtual spaces.

Prof. Hilda Paredes-Dávila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Facultad de Psicología), Ms. Judith Calvache Guevara (Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia)

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to the mandatory family coexistence and direct involvement between caregivers and teachers for the accompaniment in the completion and delivery of children’s schoolwork, which shows that in their formation families are no longer located in a second plan and share that responsibility with the school. The current context demands new ways of seeing and understanding the child / family-school bond, for which an intervention will be presented that aims to generate virtual spaces that allow understanding the current reality and promote parental involvement through group readings for 1) support caregivers due to the closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic and 2) involve caregivers with your child by reading stories that allow you to hear the children’s perspective.

This qualitative intervention carried out on parental involvement during confinement is cross-sectional and exploratory in scope, where each session carried out is based on the 6 types of involvement described by Joyce Epstein: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, taking decisions and collaboration with the community. Each of these aspects is worked on based on the needs of the community, a reading that allows the participation and reflection of families, the dialogue between caregiver and child that adjusts to the child’s perspective. As results, it is expected to generate a greater and adequate involvement of parents or caregivers about the perspective and school activities of children during this historical moment in humanity.

PROMOTION OF CHILD WELFARE THROUGH LITERACY-WRITING: INTERVENTION EXPERIENCES IN MEXICO - Reading comprehension directed to mathematics.

Prof. Hilda Paredes-Dávila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Facultad de Psicología),
Ms. Ingrid Cecilia Holst Morales (Facultad de Estudios Superiores Zaragoza, UNAM)

The work that I carry out has the general objective: to promote a taste for mathematics through the use of various textual structures in children of 3rd and 4th grade of Primary.

The types of texts that were chosen to address the different activities are literary and non-literary narrative texts. The first are stories or stories whose themes are proposed by the students, in the case of non-literary ones, they can be cooking recipes, news, reports, among the main ones.

It is important to note that the content of these texts is directly related to problems that may arise in everyday life and therefore involve mathematics, all of the above is in order to make learning meaningful and children at some point in time. their life, they are able to identify and use problem-solving strategies in their day-to-day life.

In a first evaluation, the following opinions can be seen in the students' discourse about their beliefs about mathematics: "mathematics is difficult for me," I am bad at multiplication "," it takes me a long time to solve problems ", And most of these sentences, are aimed at a difficulty in solving the logarithms that a mathematical operation implies and therefore, when presenting statements, they fall back on performing basic operations in order to reach the result, this being the only way to get there to the solution. However, doing an analysis there is no understanding of why or for what they are doing these exercises.

The methodology that is carried out, consists as a first point of knowing the beliefs of boys and girls about mathematics, inquiring about what problems they usually solve, the questions that they are asked in the statements and the procedure they use to arrive at a result . At the same time, it is important to know what they like to read, what their favorite texts are, so that without leaving aside the authentic mathematical problems, one begins by analyzing fragments of texts, stories, cooking recipes, analyzing how much is what they understand and based on it, propose various strategies to motivate reading and a taste for mathematics.

It is relevant to emphasize that reading and numbers are present in our lives, we can see them in formal and non-formal education, for example, magazine stalls, when we shop at the supermarket, in the kitchen of our house, in the text messages we write, advertisements on television, the newspaper, however, go unnoticed before our eyes. And at the moment of posing them in such a simple and natural way, the exchange in the conversation is considerably modified.

Some of the aspects that have been found during the sessions is that children really have the ability to identify parts of a text, as well as to answer their own questions. For this activity to be more enriching in their learning, it is important that by reading the texts, pauses are made to promote student participation.

The same procedure can be carried out by introducing texts related to mathematical problems with quantities such as mass, volume, always making directed approaches that lead them to analyze how they could solve the situation and how they could represent it graphically to promote their creativity.

In the particular case, that they do not have previous knowledge, the activities will be adjusted, so that that curiosity can be rescued and directed to a new knowledge from personal resources and support strategies for a better use of genuine thinking and develop skills so that their social participation in the different contexts in which they operate, is favored in the medium and long term.

PROMOTION OF CHILD WELFARE THROUGH LITERACY-WRITING: INTERVENTION EXPERIENCES IN MEXICO - THE "NIBROS" READING ROOM AS A TRAINING SPACE: THE OPINION OF THE STUDENTS

Prof. Hilda Paredes-Dávila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Facultad de Psicología)

The mission of universities is to train professionals capable of creating knowledge that responds to the challenges that society faces. In our country it is to identify and promote the social practices of the written culture of the communities, since people have a lot of knowledge about it, which is shared and built in community.The "Nibros" Reading Room of the Julián MacGregor Community Center of the Faculty of Psychology, UNAM, aims to develop professional skills in students regarding the reading and writing processes.The objective of this paper is to analyze the training experience of undergraduate and graduate students in the "Nibros" Reading Room. 41 questionnaires were applied to students, who served as promoters, to find out their opinion regarding the activities carried out, the competencies acquired during their training, the link between the practice carried out and the subjects studied, the benefits and challenges they faced and the relationship of the activities carried out in the Reading Room with their professional activity.The results indicate that the students managed to articulate their own knowledge of the discipline with the skills to select, adapt or create techniques and procedures relevant to the teaching and promotion of reading and writing, through continuous reflection and collaborative work between students of the bachelor's and master's degrees, as well as with other professionals with whom they shared their own approaches to the problems encountered to develop intervention projects according to the needs of promoting reading and writing in the community, which allows them to provide a quality service and generate applied research proposals.It is concluded that in order to influence the promotion of reading and writing in the community, autonomous, reflective professionals are required, capable of integrating the sources of knowledge of the learners, their interests in literacy and the community literacy practices to address in a comprehensive and innovative way, the problems faced by different people in the community regarding reading and writing.

PROMOTION OF CHILD WELFARE THROUGH LITERACY-WRITING: INTERVENTION EXPERIENCES IN MEXICO - WRITING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS.

Prof. Hilda Paredes-Dávila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Facultad de Psicología), Ms. Pamela Flores Ordóñez (Facultad de Estudios Superiores Iztacala, UNAM)

Phonological awareness (FC) is a skill that develops in the early ages, either before children start literacy or in the early years of it. Likewise, FC is made up of the learning of various knowledge and development of other skills, which in turn brings children closer to the practice of new experiences such as reading and writing (Gutiérrez y Díez, 2018)..

This can be observed at the different levels that make up FC, since these make up a group of skills that allow the child to be aware of their mother tongue, which in turn provides them with a new way of experiencing oral and written language.

Lexical awareness allows to recognize and manipulate the words that make up the sentences; syllabic awareness is the ability to break words down into smaller units; and phonemic awareness, helps to recognize the minimum units of speech. Each level is experienced by consciously counting, identifying, substituting, changing the order of words, syllables, and phonemes, which in turn helps children play with language as they understand it. Likewise, FC is a skill that enriches oral language and is subsequently a basis for written language and and a promoter of other processes (Mena, 2020).

On the other hand, the situation due to COVID 19, came to change not only the way in which teachers teach but also in which children learn academic issues, about their life and what surrounds them. Which leads to questioning new ways of working and interacting with children, for their cognitive and emotional well-being as part of their learning.

Therefore, the proposal of this project is to develop FC, for learning to write with a comprehensive approach that considers the current context of the pandemic and the child, as well as her personal interests.

Therefore, the question of the present work is how to develop phonological awareness, in the acquisition of writing in children of 6-8 years of age

PROMOTION OF CHILD WELFARE THROUGH LITERACY-WRITING: INTERVENTION EXPERIENCES IN MEXICO -Stimulation of the comprehension process of written reading from textual structures in students

Prof. Hilda Paredes-Dávila (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Facultad de Psicología), Mr. Mauricio García Lomelí (Facultad de Estudios Superiores Zaragoza, UNAM)

In the school context, a significant emphasis has been placed on reading comprehension, since statistics point to the low performance of this skill worldwide, in addition to the little interest that the practice of reading had had in schools. Reading is a skill that includes different strategies that are trained every day and anywhere. The elements that include this exercise can be found at home, in public transport, on the street, in shops, at school, to name a few examples. The importance of finding readings everywhere is the opportunity to put it into practice, as well as a ‘’ need” generated on its own initiative and with an intrinsic motivation. The little ones, seeing that there are always letters in their environment, seek to understand and know what the words want to say to us, even relying on images, colors and other previous knowledge that they use daily. The objective of this work is to stimulate the processes necessary in reading comprehension. These objectives were related to promoting vocabulary Reading Comprehension strategies, decoding a message, and generating a product based on the elements that are available. We sought to work on these skills with tools such as inference or text prediction. We worked with the population of the second grade of primary school, with an age ranging between seven and eight years of age from a school in Mexico City. The working group started with 21 participants. Weekly sessions were carried out through the Zoom platform, in which the application of the Reading Comprehension Inventory (In.Co.Le) began, in order to know the level of comprehension present in infants. During the sessions, it was sought to promote the three main skills (vocabulary, coding of the message and generation of a product) with the support of textual writings such as stories, riddles, sayings, phrases, statements, etc. After each session, participants are asked to answer three questions: what was the reading called?; what did I like the most? and what would change? They carried out this exercise on cards made by the children with recycling materials, colors, and markers of their choice. The objective of this exercise was to keep a physical record that would show the progress of the boys and girls who can see session by session. Exercises were taken such as word identification, finishing the sentences, inferring the meaning of some unknown words, creating sentences or sentences using newly known words, in addition to constant questions about the liking or rejection of the exercise, with which, when making the evaluation another type of analysis is carried out on the reading that was worked on. During the development of the activities, it was sought to know the tastes and preferences of the children to generate materials and activities with attractive features for them. For example, they were asked about their favorite animals, readings they liked the most, favorite book, favorite characters, whether they had pets and how they related to these points. It helped to take these details into account to improve participation, adherence and attraction about what we worked on in the sessions. To observe the effectiveness of the work carried out, it was planned to carry out a new application of the Reading Comprehension Inventory, which would allow us to see both the strengths and the areas of opportunity of the workshop design.

Protecting Children, Creating Citizens: Participatory Child Protection Practice in Norway and the United States

Dr. Katrin Križ (Emmanuel College)

In this presentation, I discuss the main take-aways of my book, *Protecting Children, Creating Citizens: Participatory Child Protection Practice in Norway and the United States* , forthcoming with Policy Press in 2020. These takeaways might be of interest to child welfare practitioners, activists, students, and scholars. The book presents valuable insights from front-line child protection professionals' unique perspectives and experiences within two very different systems and evaluates the impacts of different organizational practices in promoting children and young people's participation.

Based on qualitative interviews with child protection caseworkers in Norway and the United States (California), I show that the child protection workers who practice a participatory approach empower children by 'doing participation' in five ways. They actively engage children and youth and build a respectful rapport with them. They provide information about the case process and the rationale behind the child protection agency's decisions. They give children time and space to develop and express their opinions, and they include young people as consultants and collaborators in important decisions, thus creating 'youth citizens.' Lastly, they divest power away from themselves towards children through 'recognition work'— by conveying to children and young people that they recognize their feelings and wishes and consider them valuable contributors to decision-making processes.

Psychological Adjustment and Language Development of Young Children in Residential Care

Prof. Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto), Dr. Joana Campos Pereira (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Prof. Pedro Dias (Catholic University of Portugal, Centre for Studies in Human Development, Faculty of Education and Psychology), Dr. Sónia Rodrigues (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

In Portugal, 98% children under the age of three removed from their birth families are living in Residential Care (RC) centres. The early placement of children in RC can dramatically affect their development.

This study aims to: identify the frequency of internalizing, externalizing and total problems, as well as the average number of words used by young children in RC; compare the frequency of these children's problems and their vocabulary to a Portuguese normative sample that allowed for the validation and standardization of the ASEBA Battery in Portugal; analyse differences among the children in RC according to gender, preschool integration, presence of siblings in the same RC centre, and the size of the RC centre itself and explore the correlations between the adjustment measures and language development and sociodemographic variables.

One hundred and sixteen Portuguese children (56.9% female) ranging from 0 to 71 months (under 6 years) participated in this study. Data were collected using the ASEBA Battery.

Results showed that children in RC tend to have higher levels of Internalizing, Externalizing and Total Problems when compared to children living with their families and indicated a higher prevalence of psychopathology. Regarding the mean number of words, the results indicated that children in RC show language delay when compared to children living with their families, especially those separated from their siblings and living in a context which has not been able to provide enough contact with other children.

These findings highlight the importance of paying attention to the specific needs of preschool children in RC. The results show that the placement of children in an institution at an early age may be an important risk factor for the child's psychological adjustment and development. These results further emphasized the greater vulnerability of the children living in RC when compared to children growing up in normative conditions. Results also reinforce the current Legislation which defines that priority should be given to family foster care, in particular for children up to six years of age.

Public monitoring of foster care: perspectives from social workers, foster parents and children

Dr. David Pålsson (Department of Social Work, Stockholm University)

In Sweden, foster care is the most common out-of-home care intervention and means that a child is removed from his/her guardians and placed in another family. A placement in foster care implies a considerable societal responsibility. Historically there is evidence of maltreatment in care and current research show that there are shortcomings within important care aspects (e.g. health and school support). How social services perform the task to monitor care is crucial and Swedish policy increasingly underscore the importance of monitoring care. For instance, recent reforms involve that foster children have their own social worker who is solely responsible for their predicaments, while foster carers have another social worker. There are also more requirements on minimum number of visits per year and calls from central state agencies that municipalities conduct more systematic follow-up of placements.

However, foster care is a complicated monitoring object. For instance, it is a non-professional task that is executed by laypersons in a family context and a placement involves an organisational separation between the social services and the foster homes. Also, in Sweden, the separation is increased by the fact that the child welfare agencies frequently buy ‘placements’ from private companies who recruit and support foster carers. How child welfare agencies might gain insight into the care milieus and actually impact a child’s situations is not self-evident.

The presentation is based on an ongoing research project that aims at exploring preconditions and strategies for the monitoring of foster care. The research is performed through case studies of six Swedish municipalities who differ in terms of size and organisation of monitoring. Data consists of local guidelines as well as around 40 interviews with social workers, foster parents and young people in care. The presentation focuses how monitoring is organised and performed in the municipalities and analyses the possibilities to actually impact the care provided children. The presentation also analyses how foster carers and young people describe the function and meaning of the monitoring activities performed by the child welfare agencies.

Putting Children First: Changing the Narrative of looked after Children in India

Dr. Kiran Modi (Founder Managing Trustee, Udayan Care), Dr. Gurneet Kaur Kalra (Udayan Care New Delhi, India), Ms. Leena Prasad (Udayan Care New Delhi, India)

Udayan Care, an NGO, headquartered in New Delhi, has an innovative group home model for ‘children without parental care’ (CWPC), implementing the indigenously developed LIFE (Living in Family Environment) strategy in its 17 ‘Udayan Ghars’ (Sunshine care homes). The purpose of these Ghars is to nurture these children, who have been orphaned, abandoned or abused and in need of care and protection. The five pillars of the model being: a trained carer team, community orientation and involvement, focus on all round development, child participation and continued aftercare support. The carer team for each home consists of full-time, resident care staff (2-3 for every 12 children); social workers for every 24 children; part-time counselors, a psychologist and a child and adolescent psychiatrist; and a unique feature, mentor parents, long-term, committed volunteers, bringing parenting and social exposure to the children.

With child participation as a core pillar, Udayan Care developed a Questionnaire to Assess the Needs of Children in Care (QANCC) in 2011, as a longitudinal study. Developed by a cadre of professionals, the tool was conceived to ascertain whether children in the ‘Ghars’ felt that their rights were being fulfilled and their needs were being addressed. With “meaningful participation” of children stipulated by United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the objective of this longitudinal study is to develop an evidence-based indicator to assess whether the rights of children are being met, from their own point of view, year on year and to improve the care practice, wherever needed. The self-assessment tool consists of questions assessing four dimensions of basic/fundamental needs, emotional needs, educational needs, and interpersonal needs, at a four-point rating scale. A convenient purposive sampling is done with children between 10 to 18 years of age who have lived at the ‘Ghars’ for a minimum of 6 months.

Longitudinal results until 2017 showed that, on an average, 76.8% of children felt their needs were being met. Upon identifying areas of unmet needs, interim measures were taken to improve the quality of care, such as enhanced psychosocial support, workshops and life skills trainings, establishing specialized committees to address children’s education, health and aftercare needs, and revision of care plans for children, the results of which demonstrated a rise in the mean scores. Workshops involving child participation were initiated and continue to be conducted regularly. A gap year was implemented in 2017-18, with the hope of minimizing the carry-over effects inevitable to a longitudinal research of this nature. The gap year has also aided in efforts towards the standardization process, developing the tool to cover further pertinent aspects of children’s lives. Another recommendation of the previous study was to do literature review to find out if any such participatory tools existed. The desk review revealed that no such participatory, standardized tools are presently available in keeping with the unique socio-economic, cultural aspects in India, for CWPC living in Institutional Care, to assess their needs, in India, taking into consideration the adverse childhood experiences most among them have had to face.

This paper has two objectives, one to perform deductions of the previous years’ data (2011-12 to 2016-17) and demarcating the differences with year 2018-19 data and second, there is an update on efforts made to establish reliability and validity and create a standardized tool that can be implemented by other child care institutions in India. The study illustrates how effective listening to the direct voices of children and incorporating their inputs into actual care practice, go a long way in improving holistic wellness of children living in alternative care-settings.

Quality in professional leadership in turbulent times– Norwegian child welfare leaders leadership strategies

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The child welfare service in Norway have the last years been criticized for having weaknesses in leadership, prioritization, structure and competence. The child welfare leaders have been under great pressure. In addition to criticism, new ideals of governance and reforms in the public sector have led to changes in the conditions for child welfare leadership. The attention has increased after the European Court of Human Rights (EMD) convicted Norway of human rights violations in several child welfare cases. Leadership skills are in increasing demand, and the need for stronger leadership is one of the priority areas in the national child welfare reform. There is a gap between the national expectation and requirements of child welfare leadership and how the child welfare leaders practice leadership. It is a clear expectation that the leadership should be professionalized through the clarification of leaders' understandings of roles, and the strengthening of leadership competence.

The child welfare service in Norway has a decentralized structure, and most tasks are a municipal responsibility. The municipal child welfare leader has professional, staff and financial responsibility, and has great autonomy when it comes to professional decisions. This implies that how the child welfare services in the municipalities are managed are of significance for the quality in the services children at risk receive. Child welfare service are depended on strategic leadership that render it possible to implement children's perspectives. Regardless of municipal organization and leadership, the objective is that every child should receive the same offering, irrespective of geographical or other issues. This is a challenge to the municipal child welfare service and contributes towards making the leadership of child welfare complex and intricate. Child welfare leaders describe their lives as leaders as demanding, emotionally charged and unpredictable, with frequent shifts in focus. This implies that leadership has to be exercised in new ways and adapted to new situations.

The purpose of the paper is firstly to identify the leadership strategies municipal child welfare leaders use; secondly, to describe and explain these strategies using situational leadership theory; and thirdly, to contribute to an increased knowledge base on child welfare leadership. The problem at hand is twofold: What leadership strategies do the municipal child welfare leaders use to adapt their leadership to today's challenging situation, and to what extent can these strategies be at help professionalizing leadership?

The empirical data are based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with child welfare leaders from different municipalities in Norway. The sample consists of 20 municipal child welfare leaders, of which 18 are women and 2 men. It reflects the gender distribution among Norwegian child welfare leaders.

The study shows that Norwegian child welfare leaders use different leadership strategies. The leaders have to deal with increasing complexity, and their leadership toolbox contains different situation-based strategies as they use to adapt their leadership to today's situation. Further, the study shows that there are some challenges using some of the strategies, as collective discretion and team management. Some of the strategies may not lead to close the gap between national expectations towards their practical leadership. Without strategies that provide leaders to involve children it is difficult to accomplish. Finally, we discuss the findings as well as the practical implications for managing child welfare services in Norway.

To date, there has been little research on the leadership strategies in child welfare. The research that does exist focuses principally on child welfare leaders' professional leadership and decision-making in child welfare issues. This research helps to underline how complex the field of child welfare is, and how challenging leadership in this context can be.

Quantifying the extent to which youth mental health disorders account for the association between history of out-of-home care and adverse adult functioning outcomes: a population-based study

Ms. Javiera Pumarino (University of British Columbia)

Background: Approximately 500 youth age out of out-of-home care each year at age 18 in the province of Manitoba, Canada. There is growing concern over the vulnerability of these youth, partly because of numerous highly publicized reports of premature death related to untreated mental health and substance use issues.

Objective: The objective of this study is to quantify the extent to which youth mental health disorders account for the association between history of out-of-home care and adverse adult functioning outcomes among emerging adults (aged between 18 and 29 years). Hypothesis: youth mental health disorders account for a significant proportion of the excess risk of adverse functioning outcomes among those with history of out-of-home care.

Methods: This study followed a population-based retrospective birth cohort design using de-identified linked administrative data from the province of Manitoba, Canada. The study sample included all the individuals born in Manitoba between 1986 and 1998. Of the 154,086 individuals who met the eligibility criteria, 11,699 (7.6%) were classified as having a history of out-of-home care.

Data on mental health disorders was obtained from datasets containing information on hospitalizations, physician visits, and prescription medications. The following groups of disorders were assessed until age 17: internalizing, externalizing, psychotic, and substance use. Administrative databases were used to assess the following adverse adult functioning outcomes: high school incompletion, receipt of income assistance, and criminal justice involvement.

A causal mediation approach was used to estimate the Proportion Eliminated, that is, the theoretical proportion of the association between history of out-of-home care and each adverse outcome that would be eliminated if there were no individuals diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

Results: History of out-of-home care was significantly associated with having any type of youth mental health disorder and with each type of disorder. Emerging adults with a history of foster care were significantly more likely to experience all adverse adult functioning outcomes.

Having any type of youth mental health disorder accounted for a significant proportion of the association between history of out-of-home care and having been charged with a crime (Proportion Eliminated: 38.5, 95%CI: 37.8, 39.2), having received income assistance (PE: 56.7, 95%CI: 55.9, 57.4), and having incomplete high school (PE: 45.3, 95%CI: 44.5, 46.1).

Impact: Evidence generated from this study has increased our understanding of the psychosocial needs of youth transitioning out of care and will inform the development of interventions to support their successful transition into independent adult living.

Racial and ethnically marginalized groups and decisional disparities in child welfare - Child Welfare Interventions at the Intersection of Ethnicity and Poverty in the UK

Dr. Calum Webb (The University of Sheffield)

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This paper presents the findings of an analysis of predictive factors of child welfare interventions within different small area ethnic subpopulations in England. Recent research has highlighted that in poorer neighbourhoods White British children, on average, have higher rates of intervention than Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children. However, in more affluent neighbourhoods, BAME children have higher rates of intervention. This raises the question of whether structural associations between poverty and child welfare interventions apply equally to children from all backgrounds.

Using multilevel negative binomial regression models to control for possible confounding factors we found that, holding deprivation and differential social gradients constant, there are few significant differences in intervention rates between ethnic populations. We find that the relationship between poverty and intervention rates is drastically different for different ethic populations. This indicates that the current structural explanations we apply to the White majority population appear to work poorly for minority ethnic populations. We cannot confidently suggest that differential exposure to poverty alone explains the disproportionate numbers of BAME children taken into care or placed on child protection plans in England. This raises difficult questions about how professionals interpret poverty, need, and risk for different ethnic groups within the contexts of their socioeconomic circumstances.

Racial and ethnically marginalized groups and decisional disparities in child welfare - Ethnic and gender disparities and the role of stereotypes in child protection decision-making

Ms. Floor Middel (University of Groningen), Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen), Prof. John Fluke (University of Colorado), Prof. Hans Grietens (KU Leuven)

Background. Child protection decisions, such as providing services or placing a child out of home, seem impacted by disparities. This means that marginalized groups, such as minoritized ethnic groups or women, seem negatively impacted by child protection decisions. For instance, research has shown that children from disadvantaged ethnic groups are more likely to receive child protection interventions and maltreatment committed by mothers seems associated with an increased likelihood of out-of-home placements.

Objectives. Research on the underlying causes and biases of disparities is scarce. In this study we investigate whether stereotypes mediate disparities in child protection decision-making, by applying the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) which states that stereotypes are formed by perceptions of sociability, morality, and competence.

Methods. We conducted an experimental 3x2 vignette study to investigate disparities in decision-making. We altered family ethnicity (white, Black, or Latinx) and the gender of the parent who seemed responsible for child maltreatment (mother or father), while all other case facts remained constant. 258 child protection professionals from Colorado participated in the study. 125 were trainees just at the start of their child protection career. The remaining 133 participants were currently working in the child protection system. After randomly presenting them with one of the vignettes, they rated the sociability, morality, and competence of the parent, assessed the risk for future harm, and rated to what extent they believed that a supervision order should be provided. Using a structural equation model, we examined whether the dimensions of the SCM (i.e., perceived sociability, morality, and competence) mediated potential ethnic and gender disparities in decision-making.

Results and conclusions. We obtained a SEM model (cfi = .95, rmsea = .04) with different model coefficients for trainees and current workers. For both trainees and current workers, there was no substantial evidence that ethnicity and gender in the vignette impacted stereotypes for sociability, morality, and competence and that stereotypes mediated disparities. However, evidence appeared for disparities in decision-making. Trainees agreed to a higher extent that a supervision order should be provided for the white father (β = 0.20), Black mother (β = 0.22), Latinx mother (β = 0.27), and Latinx father (β = 0.18) compared to white mother condition. Current workers rated the risk for the child's future harm higher in cases with Black mothers (β = 0.20), Latinx mothers (β = 0.21), and Latinx fathers (β = 0.23) compared to the white mother condition. Then, higher risk scores increased the score for providing a supervision order (β = 0.26). Even though stereotypes did not seem to differ substantially for the vignette groups, it appeared that perceived morality correlated significantly with variables in the decision-making processes and seems of importance in the decision-making process. Trainees who perceived a parent as more moral, seemed less likely to provide a supervision order (β = -0.28). For current workers, higher morality scores were associated with lower risk scores (β = -0.23).

Racial and ethnically marginalized groups and decisional disparities in child welfare - Exploring Alternate Specifications to Explain Agency-level Effects in Placement Decisions Regarding Indigenous Children in Canada

Dr. Barbara Fallon (University of Toronto), Ms. Jessica Carradine (University of Toronto)

Contact person for joint proposal: Floor Middel

A series of analyses have explored the influence of clinical and organizational characteristics on the decision to place a child in out-of-home care at the conclusion of a child maltreatment investigation. The purpose of this report is to highlight the consistent finding that the proportion of investigations involving Indigenous children at a child welfare agency is associated with placement for all children in that agency. The decision to place a child in out-of-home care was examined using data from the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (1998, 2003, 2008). This child welfare dataset collects information about the results of child maltreatment investigations, as well as descriptions of the characteristics of the workers and organizations responsible for conducting those investigations. Multi-level statistical models were developed using MPlus software, which can accommodate dichotomous outcome variables and are more reflective of decision-making in child welfare. The models are thus multi-level binary logistic regressions. Final models revealed that the proportion of investigations conducted by the child welfare agency involving Indigenous children was a key agency-level predictor of the placement decision for any child served by the agency. Specifically, the higher the proportion of investigations of Indigenous children, the more likely placement was to occur for any child. Results from these analyses support the possibility that one source of overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the Canadian foster care system is a lack of appropriate resources at the agency or community level. Further analysis is needed to fully understand individual and organizational level variables that may influence decisions regarding placement of Indigenous children.

Racial and ethnically marginalized groups and decisional disparities in child welfare - The role of instrumental biases in sustaining child protection inequalities: the case of intimate partner violence

Dr. Emily Keddell (University of Otago)

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Despite the best intentions of child protection systems in many countries, ethnic, gender and socioeconomic inequalities are persistent, and in some cases increasing. Over-exposure to poverty of some groups may increase the true incidence of child abuse and neglect through placing stress on family life. Stressors are exacerbated by contexts where there are few universal social protections, low community social cohesion, and poorly matched quality and quantity of culturally -relevant services. This direct increase in risk combines with a number of biases to produce disparities. These biases include the direct bias of practitioners (both notifiers and child protection workers), the over-surveillance of some groups, and visibility bias. However, beyond these established bias and risk factors, the role of instrumental biases – proxy factors that embed institutionalised inequities via neither direct bias nor exposure bias - have been less explored. This conceptual talk explores the way that intimate partner violence may operate as an instrumental proxy that contributes to the reinforcement of ethnic, gender and socioeconomic disparities in the chances of system contact. I argue that differences in the experience of IPV between ethnic/class groups, the differential consequences of IPV for different groups of survivors, the theoretical reconstruction of IPV as a type of child abuse, and the exposure bias caused by automatic referral of IPV police callouts to child protection systems, all contribute to increasing disparities in notifications to the ‘front-door’ of child protection systems. Once through this threshold, intervention in IPV cases is shaped by the combination of the construction of the role of statutory child protection to focus only on the child separately from the needs of parents; a reliance on records in assessments rather than relational information; risk aversion; and limited theoretical understandings of IPV. Often women are construed as ‘failing to protect’ and must perform protection within a narrow range of acceptable behaviours. I contend that this confluence of factors results in increasing child protection intervention in the family lives of Indigenous and ethnic minority women and children who are living in high deprivation areas. Implications for research, policy, and practice are explored.

Racial and ethnically marginalized groups and decisional disparities in child welfare-Using Intersectionality to Understand Key Federal Policies regarding Black Children receiving Child Welfare Services in the United States

Dr. Abigail Williams-Butler (Rutgers University), Ms. Kate Golden (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey), Ms. Alicia Mendez (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey), Ms. Breana Stevens (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey)

Introduction: This study uses intersectionality as a guiding framework to examine how race, gender, and class have influenced child welfare policies regarding Black children receiving child welfare services in the United States. We use intersectionality to understand the shifting social, political, and racial ideologies of the passing of key child welfare policies in the United States. Policies are examined to explore how the Black family and its cultural patterns throughout history were often classified as dysfunctional and unsuitable for healthy child development. Further, we explore the impact these policies have had related to the overrepresentation of Black children in the child welfare system in the United States.

Methods: Drawing from a rhetorical criticism framework (Foss, 2009), seven child welfare policies are examined using related primary and secondary documents to consider how language conveys shifting social, political, and racial ideologies. Documents include original statute, Congressional testimony, expert statements on policy efficacy presented to the US Commission on Civil Rights, Government Accountability Office documents outlining citizen commentary on proposed policy changes, etc. Examination of policy effects on Black children and communities drawn from historical, legal, and empirical social science are integrated to produce an interdisciplinary exploratory policy analysis.

Results: Once Black children were formally accepted into the child welfare system after years of exclusion, discussions related to welfare eligibility and the redefinition of poverty as neglect played a major role in the overrepresentation of Black children in the child welfare system. As a result, the number of Black children under the purview of the child welfare system increased dramatically. While post-war iterations of child welfare policy demonstrate awareness of discrimination and attempted to correct for the overrepresentation of Black children, Black children are still overrepresented in the system today.

Conclusion and Implications: Taking into account the racialized, gendered, and class-based legacy of child welfare policy is a first step in reducing racial and ethnic inequality regarding child welfare policy and services for Black children in the United States. Decisions regarding child welfare policy must take into account the intersections of race, gender, and class in order to acknowledge and reduce racial inequality in the child welfare system in the United States.

Reflective Functioning and Social Skills in School-Aged Adoptees

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Background: Reflective functioning (RF) refers to the psychological processes that allow one to recognize the existence and nature of others' mental and emotional states, as well as one's own thoughts and feelings. Very little is known about adopted children's RF. However, it has been argued that low RF is closely related to greater pre-adoption adversity. Both the discontinuity in attachment relationships and the probability of adopted children developing disorganized attachments affect adoptees' ability to reflect on their own and others' mental and emotional states. Furthermore, early adversity, namely pre-adoption negative experiences, has been related to low levels of adoptees' social skills. Nevertheless, in adoption research, there are no studies exploring the relationship between RF and social skills. **Objectives:**This study aims to explore the evidence of RF in school-aged adoptees and the relationship between the evidence of RF and adoptees' social skills and problem behaviours. **Method:**Ninety-six adopted children, aged 8 to 10, and their 166 adoptive parents participated in this study. The Friends and Family Interview (FFI; Steele & Steele, 2005), which is a semi-structured interview, was used to assess RF and the children's discursive coherence. The adoptees' ability to acknowledge the mental/emotional states of their adoptive mother, adoptive father, teacher and best friend was assessed by analysing their responses to the questions *What do you think your mother/father/teacher/best friend thinks of you?*. Children's answers were coded by two independent raters on a 4-point Likert Scale of 1 – *no evidence*, 2 – *low evidence*, 3 – *moderate evidence* and 4 – *high evidence* of RF. The Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (Gresham and Elliott, 2008) were used to evaluate adoptees' social skills, from their own and adoptive parents' perspectives. **Findings:** Most children showed moderate evidence of discursive coherence and rudimentary RF regardless of the significant figure (mother, father, preferred teacher, best friend). Nevertheless, adoptees showed higher RF in relation to the adoptive mother and best friend than regarding the teacher and adoptive father. Girls showed greater evidence of RF. No significant relationships were found between the child's age, the child's age at adoption, or the time spent in pre-adoption out-of-home care and RF evidence. However, the level of discourse coherence was positively correlated to the length of adoption, and negatively correlated to the time spent in pre-adoption out-of-home care. The lower the adoptees' discursive coherence, the higher the adoptees' problem behaviours, and the lower their social skills. The higher the adoptees' social skills accordingly their adoptive parents' perspective, the higher their RF in relation to the best friend, adoptive mother, and adoptive father. There was no relationship between RF and children's problem behaviours. **Implications:**These findings bring novel and advanced scientific evidence to school-aged adoptees' cognitive and socio-emotional functioning.

Relationship quality and care arrangements in families with chronically ill or impaired children

Dr. Ulrike Lux (German Youth Institute), Dr. Laura Castiglioni (German Youth Institute), Dr. Johanna Schütz (German Youth Institute)

Objectives: Family research has shown the negative consequences of parental divorce or interparental conflict for family and child development (see Walper, 2016). Both disagreement in parenting practices and questions of taking over family and care work – which is still not equally shared between mothers and fathers – are reasons for such conflicts. Children with chronic illnesses, and mental or physical disabilities place increased demands on family care arrangements and can become a challenge for the interparental relationship. Generally, meta-analytic evidence points to worse psychosocial adjustment for parents with than without chronically ill children (Teubert & Pinquart, 2013). However, findings are heterogeneous for partnership quality, seeming to depend also on the nature of the child's disability: While some studies show higher partnership satisfaction e.g. in parents of children with cancer (Lavee & Mey-Dan, 2003), others find no differences (Ausserhofer, Mantovan, Pirhofer, Huber & Them, 2009) or lower partnership quality e.g. in parents of children with ADHD or autism (Ben-Naim, Gill, Laslo-Roth & Einav, 2019; Brobst, Clopton & Hendrick, 2009). For Germany, until now, population-based studies on (partnership) well-being and the work-life-balance of this group of parents are lacking. Also, it has not yet been examined, whether financial resources play a role in the association between children's health impairments and interparental relationship quality. Our paper investigates the care arrangements of families with chronically ill or disabled children. It sheds light on how parents cope with the increased need for care and support of their children, and whether the chronical illness affects the quality of the parents' relationship.

Method: The sample comprised 2812 partnered anchor persons of wave 5 of the German Family Panel *pairfam*, of which 694 indicate a chronic illness or disability of a child ("affected" couples). We used Ordinary-Least-Squares models to predict indicators of partnership quality, work and care arrangements as well as the parental well-being.

Results: At first, neither employment rates nor number of working hours differed between affected and non-affected couples. Also participation in childcare in the household is no different. But after controlling for parents' education, number of children and age of the youngest child, we do find that "affected" mothers are less likely to be employed, and they do work fewer hours. While some more general indicators of partnership satisfaction and stability do not differ in affected and non-affected parents, other, behavior-based indicators (e.g. positive regard, constructive conflict behavior) suggest an impaired partnership quality in affected couples, especially for mothers. Having a disabled or chronically diseased child also seems to affect the personal well-being of mothers (e.g. depressiveness, stress).

Conclusions: Our results suggest that having a chronically ill or disabled child does put a strain on the interparental relationship, especially from the perspective of mothers. Findings are discussed with regard to family systems theory and family policy.

Relationships Between Healthcare Providers and Gender and Sexual Minority Foster Youth: An Exploratory Study

Mr. Ryan Karnoski (University of California, Berkeley), Ms. Angie Wootton (University of California, Berkeley)

Introduction: Gender and sexual minority (GSM) youth in the foster care system face unique barriers to obtaining and maintaining permanent homes compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers, such as being more likely to be placed in foster care, group homes or experiencing homelessness. When GSM youth experience caregiver disruption, they often are subject to moves and needing to re-establish their social service networks in their new areas of residence. Research has shown that experiencing multiple placement changes while in foster care increases the physical and mental healthcare use of foster youth, as they need to continually initiate new relationships with providers and may receive a different quality of care compared to those with stable care. While the disruptions to care that many GSM youth in care experience likely negatively impact their experiences with the mental and health care systems and their overall health outcomes, providers that interface with these youth have the opportunity to provide high-quality care to help improve this populations' health outcomes.

Objectives: As a positive relationship with a healthcare provider has been shown to be a protective factor in health outcomes for gender and sexual minority youth, it is imperative to further explore the factors that promote or inhibit positive, stable relationships between GSM youth in foster care and their healthcare and mental healthcare providers. This study addresses a gap in the child welfare literature in the field of child welfare research by offering insights into both positive and challenging relationship dynamics that operate between healthcare and mental healthcare providers and their GSM foster youth patients.

Methods: Eight healthcare and mental healthcare providers who serve gender and sexual minority foster youth in the Pacific Northwest area (mostly the greater Seattle, WA area) were recruited for participation via email. Individual semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one hour were conducted with each service provider via the phone, in person, or over email. An open-ended and loose interview guide was used as a basis for conversation topics. Interviews were transcribed and qualitative phenomenological thematic analysis occurred across all interviews simultaneously.

Results: Several themes emerged from the qualitative analysis, including both challenges and positive relational factors between care providers and youth. Providers reported that having shared LGBTQ identities with their clients, personal connections to issues clients face, the ability to affirm the gender and/or sexual orientation of their clients in the face of disapproving families, awareness of how to best communicate with GSM foster youth, and the presence of other strengths enhanced their relationships and experiences of success with their clients. Many providers simultaneously reported numerous challenges establishing and maintaining close relationships with their clients, citing issues such as clients' frequent geographic moves, financial constraints behind service provision, and experiences of secondary trauma and lack of emotional closure. Providers indicated that they often felt a strong emotional response when reflecting on their experience providing care for a particular, sometimes singular client whose outcomes they were strongly invested in, with whom they abruptly lost contact due to a change in living arrangements related to the child's case plan or abscondence from care.

Conclusion: Given the unique needs of gender and sexual minority youth in the foster care system, it is essential that medical and mental health providers who serve this population take care to cultivate close, stable professional relationships with their clients. While GSM youth experience a range of risk factors that put them at risk for disruptions in service access and health disparities as a result, there are ways that providers can enhance their connections with their clients in order to provide high-quality care and improve this populations' health outcomes.

Relationships that Last: the perspectives of care-experienced young adults on connecting and staying connected with their foster family into adulthood

Dr. Mandi MacDonald (Queen's University Belfast), Mr. Gerry Marshall (Queen's University Belfast)

Context: Enabling young people in foster care to benefit from lasting supportive relationships is a priority for child welfare services in the United Kingdom, where the majority of children in state care are fostered. For those who cannot return to birth parents, long-term foster care is intended to provide stable, continuous caring relationships that last throughout childhood into adult life – the elements of permanence expressed in UK policy. However, care leavers have highlighted the challenge of feeling isolated and having to navigate early adulthood without a strong social network (HM Government, 2016). We know that continuous relationships with caring adults matter to young people in care and are fundamental to securing better outcomes (Boddy, 2013), but how to achieve this remains something of a mystery.

Objective: This paper will report on a research project that aimed to learn about effective foster care practice from formerly fostered adults who have maintained relationships with their foster family into adulthood. From a critical best practice approach, we aimed to identify the active ingredients of these lasting relationships, and what worked well to create the conditions in which they could thrive: to uncover what is inside the black box of lasting relationships and the practices that enable relational permanence.

Method: The project was undertaken in partnership with Barnardos Fostering Northern Ireland (NI), and with a Peer Advisory Group of care experienced adults who were involved in developing the interview format and recruitment materials, and in reviewing the data to identify key messages.

The project methodology involved narrative interviews with care-experienced adults (n=12) and with their former foster carers (n=22) separately. The formerly fostered adults aged between 18 and 28 years old; had been looked after in a Barnardos NI foster care placement up to or beyond their 16th birthday within the past 15 years; and continued to have a relationship with their foster family after the formal ending of the placement. Participants were asked to relate the story of their foster relationships in their own terms using a visual timeline diagram to help structure their narrative. They were also asked to complete a visual relationship map and discuss the closeness/distance of their relationship with foster carers and other important people, and to recount typical interactions to ascertain the practices that forged and sustained these relationships. A card sorting exercise ascertained the ongoing nature of practical, emotional and guidance support received from foster family or others.

Findings: Drawing on concepts of subjective and enacted permanence (Sinclair et al, 2005), this paper will describe the current nature of relationships between the care experienced adults and their foster family, and the trajectory of these relationships over time, focusing on how relationships were forged and sustained. It will report on the following key themes:

-Family ownership and belonging enabled through: 'normal' family routines; inclusion in family traditions; parity and equity; naming practices; 'home' and attachment to place; young people's choice and agency.

-Lasting relationships characterised by: family practices of communication, inclusion and help; reciprocal engagement; tenacity and endurance; empathy and respect.

-Navigating relational challenges, crisis endings and structural constraints.

Conclusion: participants weathered often turbulent relationship trajectories to sustain meaningful and mutually valued connections and a strong sense of belonging. The paper will conclude with reflections on practices that facilitated relational permanence for this sample of participants.

Removal of Arab children from homes by Israeli court order: From the perspective of mothers from East Jerusalem

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Background

Few studies dedicated to the implications of child removal on the mothers, even though their well-being is essential to the children's integration in their new environment. This study aims to limit this gap in the literature while focusing on Arab mothers in Israel. The experiences of these mothers might be unique due to the traditions of Arab families where the women's main duty is as a wife and mother.

The proposed presentation aims to shed light on the experiences of Arab mothers whose children were placed in residential care by Israeli court order. These children have been removed for over four years; more than the maximum time allowed by the welfare ministry. The study focused on the perspective of the mothers concerning the removal of their children and the implications on the mothers' personal, familial and social lives.

Method

The sample included 15 Arab mothers aged 25-45 from East Jerusalem who had at least one child removed from the home by court order for more than four years. We used a snowball sampling. Most women were divorced and had more than one child in residential care. The in-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed. We used content analysis to map the main themes expressed by the women.

Findings

The analysis indicated some characteristics of the mothers: All were beaten during their childhood by their parents and later by their husbands, and most of them by their husband's families, too. All the mothers lived in severe poverty and could not give their children a decent home without social help.

The removals were without the mother's active objection and the use of court order was a way to avoid paying for residential care in most of the cases. However, most of the women saw themselves as victims of their situation and of the social services and denied abusing their children (the formal reason for removal). Some described their children as "hard to educate". The mothers did not get to take part in the decision about the continuation of residential placement, and they did not have the resources to fight to get their children back.

The mothers described a variety of implications on their lives as a result of their children's removal, including emotional distress and health impacts. They experienced an increase in violence against them from their biological families, their spouses and their spouse's families. Socially, the mothers experienced banishment and criticism as ones who try to abandon their motherly duties. None of them received any emotional support from informal or formal resources to deal with their distress.

Conclusion and Implications:

This study suggests that mothers of removed children were neglected not only in research but also in practice. The findings highlighted the repeated experience of these mothers as victims. The children's removal is another experience of victimization, as their voices were not heard. These women were not entitled to support from any resources and the findings highlighted the absence of services to support the mothers in mourning their child's removal and in enabling reunification. We, therefore, highlight the need to provide comprehensive formal support for these women.

Representations and Discourses in Leaving Care Research: problematizing the familiar in the construction of the 'care leaver'

Dr. Roxana Anghel (Anglia Ruskin Univeristy), Prof. Jan Storø (Oslo Metropolitan University)

As the momentum on leaving care is picking up pace globally, at a time when we, academic researchers, increasingly organise ourselves into a global voice (e.g., International Research Network on Transition to Adulthood from Care (INTRCA) Global; regional networks; international conferences), it is timely to put our work under scrutiny to explore what discourses we are constructing about 'care leavers'. Poststructuralists argue that discourse is the root to all social reality which various voices are constructing, legitimizing, contesting, restructuring. What kind of voices are we, the researchers producing texts and knowledge with the intention of influencing policy, society's attitudes and investments, and ultimately, the lives of young people leaving care in various cultural contexts?

Whilst we are powerful in representing their experiences, our positionality is limited: we construct this narrative mostly in the absence of situated experiential knowledge whilst care leavers rarely have direct access to this construction. We acknowledge this limitation, and in this paper, we aim to deconstruct our collective discursive practices and analyse their effects.

Inspiration for this work came from the authors' combined observations, based on extensive engagement in publishing and reading leaving care literature, that much of it tends to discuss care leavers by repeatedly contrasting poor leaving care outcomes against those of the general youth population. In the early stages of leaving care research, in the 1970s-90s, this has been an effective strategy to make visible the social inequality experienced by this relatively small group. The trend however appears to have endured over the decades, and we would like to propose several critical questions. Are we, through our strategy of argument construction, shaping a stereotypical discourse of 'less'? And whilst we, as researchers, are invested in observing, analysing, and highlighting affronts to social justice, are we inadvertently contributing to an overall deficit narrative and mechanisms of 'othering'?

These questions are important from ontological, ethical and impact perspectives: we have the ethical responsibility to critically analyse our institutionalised constructions of what a care leaver or the reality of leaving care are so that we refresh and update our framing practices for effective advocacy and change. With these questions we propose to critically analyse from within the research community, by making the familiarity of 'care leaver' strange (Allan, 2018).

This is a proof-of-concept paper which will elaborate this argument to inform a poststructuralist discourse analysis aimed to analyse the contemporary international discourse on care leavers. Analysing the international literature is appropriate, as research reporting practices cross borders and inform discourse and practice locally. A sample of peer reviewed texts produced by academic researchers in the last two decades will be examined focusing on the voices, mechanisms, purpose, and consequences of our collective discourses. Unpacking these discourses helps to uncover the production of particular 'truths' about young people leaving care, differentially positioning them as either a problem, or with agency and capacity to define their own lives.

Research and evaluation of the National Project for the inclusion and integration of Roma children in Italy. How to put Roma child at the core of the process and how to make school welcoming.

Dr. francesco chezzi (Istituto degi Innocenti), Mrs. Adriana Ciampa (ministry of labor and social policies)

This research aims to present the results of an investigation and evaluation of a project aimed at the inclusion of Roma children in Italy.

The project is promoted at a national level by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies; Istituto degli Innocenti is in charge of the Technical Assistance.

The European and national legal framework of the project lies in the “National Strategy for Inclusion of RSC 2012-2020”, adopted by Italian Government to put into effect the Communication nr. 173/2011 from the European Commission. (UNAR, 2012)

The Project’s purposes are to develop processes of inclusion for Roma children, to reduce their discrimination and to strengthen local communities by creating integration between school, RSC families and children and social services.

The implementation of actions have three core elements: the cooperative learning as an educational strategy; the empowerment of families towards school and local services; the strengthening of the capacity of the municipality to act through multidisciplinary and multi-level teamwork, and the exchange of expertise and practices at national level.

The Project’s main target audience is Roma children ages 6-14. Particular attention has been reserved also to children aged from 3 to 5 with activities to promote their early schooling provision and to adolescents that are attending vocational training and are at risk of school dropping out.

The project has seen a constant and significant expansion of the territories and beneficiaries involved over the years: today there are almost 600 RSC children beneficiaries (quadrupled since the start of the experimentation in 2013) and 73 schools involved throughout Italy (they were 22 in 2013).

Among the main outcomes: consolidation of the territorial network and an increase in frequency (about 8% for those who participated in the 3 years of the PON Inclusion) and school outcomes (7% of promotions) of RSC children.

The evaluation framework aims in particular at detecting the impact of the Project on the beneficiaries and on all the actors involved (teachers, social and-health workers, NGO operators, etc.). The research used a variety of qualitative and quantitative tools

The focuses of the survey are: the school attendance of Roma children, their relationship with peers in the classroom, their relationship with teachers, and their families’ relationships with the school and social services.

The tools include:

- the index of inclusion, (Booth, Ainscow, 2014)
- the sociometric tests (Moreno, 1980),
- Roma children attendance
- Focus group with local actors (teachers, social and-health workers, NGO operators, etc.) (Acocella, 2008)
- Roma parents interviews
- Specific tool aimed to monitoring of attendance participation in school activities of Roma families (through a comparison of data collected at different stages of detection)

The research findings revealed the persistence of some difficulties but also several positive elements and improvements over the years, including: a significant increase in attendance, greater participation of Roma children in school life and better organization of services to support the Roma communities involved. (Arces, 2021)
Moreover, also through the outcomes of the qualitative tools, it is confirmed how important it is to promote inclusive and cooperative teaching in schools to facilitate the inclusion of Roma children by placing the perspective and point of view of the individual child at the center of action. This approach can be replicable also for other vulnerable minorities, not just for the Roma community.
Roma children's housing difficulties have a very negative impact on their success at school. In particular, the living conditions of many Roma families in settlements (widespread in Italy) exacerbate their exclusion, marginalization and discrimination from the rest of society. (Chezzi, F., Milani, S., 2020)

Residential care and cure: Achieving enduring behavior change with youth by using a Self-Determination, Common Factors and Motivational Interviewing approach

Prof. Annemiek Harder (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Residential treatment for youth includes both care, such as basic care-taking tasks and pedagogical child-rearing tasks, and cure elements, such as the therapeutic milieu and individual treatment plans. With these elements, residential treatment aims to achieve a healthy development and a decrease of the present problems with youth. However, achieving enduring change with youth after they have left residential treatment is a great challenge. This challenge can be explained by care workers' difficulties to establish good, genuine therapeutic relationships with individual youth. Furthermore, it can be explained by the commonly used treatment approach to achieve behavior change with youth during residential care.

In this paper, I suggest that higher long-term effectiveness of residential treatment can be achieved by applying a combination of three treatment approaches. First, by focusing on youth's individual needs and intrinsic motivations using the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) perspective. Second, by using the Common Factors model as residential care element to promote professionals' interpersonal skills and good, genuine therapeutic relationships with youth. For example, the ability of professionals to shift their perspective to that of the young person (i.e. empathy) seems to be crucial in building these relationships with youth. Third, by applying the Motivational Interviewing (MI) approach as a residential cure element. By integrating these approaches as intervention components, it is very likely that residential treatment will contribute to more enduring behavior changes with youth.

Residential Care in Portugal facing COVID-19

Prof. Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto), Dr. Sónia Rodrigues (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Dr. Joana Soares (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Dr. Joana Campos Pereira (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

To fight the COVID-19 outbreak, Portugal declared a State of Emergency (SE) imposing the duty of home curfew/unnecessary displacements, from March 18th to May 2nd. For children in Residential Care (RC), under the State responsibility and protection, SE meant curfew in RC for two months without birth family in-person contacts, increased social interaction difficulties due to physical distancing, limited digital resources, and poor access to education digital tools. SE was followed by “cautious freedom”, to pursue gradual, phased normality. Commercial/social activity restarted. September 15th, the State of Contingency (SC) was declared till October 14th, whereby school/community services remained open, subject to strict physical distancing rules, mask-wearing, and sanitising procedures. Restrictions imposed by COVID-19 on general life-conditions impacted the citizens’ well-being, availability and use of health resources/services, and access to education, thus increasing social and economic inequalities. In Portugal, this is the 1st research addressing the impact of COVID-19 on children in RC.

The present presentation includes two studies aimed at exploring the way children/youth in RC lived COVID-19 restrictions and the needs and resources of RC facilities in coping with them during the past SE (study 1) and SC (study 2) in Portugal, so as to draw evidence-informed policy recommendations.

Sixty-one children (70.5% girls) aged 6 to 22 (*M* = 14.81, *SD* = 3.00), in RC for 29.46 months on average (*SD* = 28.37, ranging from 1 month to 12 years) participated in the first study. Thirty-four children (55.9% boys) aged 6 to 24 (*M*= 14.18, *SD*= 4.31), in RC for 25.91 months (*SD*=17.53, ranging from 1 to 65 months) participated in the 2nd study. While in the 1st study, 17 children (27.9%) were in care together with a sibling, in the 2nd one, only 12 (35.3%) were placed with a sibling.

In each study, data collection procedures included on-line ad-hoc questionnaires with 58 items, evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale and focusing on Family, School, Health, Well-being, Difficulties, Needs, and Changes in Care. Study 1 data collection was concluded on September 2nd and was rushed due to the need to seize the opportunity and get information in a short period after the end of the COVID-19 SE. For Study 2, the same sample recruitment procedures were implemented, but due to the anonymity of the participants, there is no guarantee of common participants in both studies, restraining longitudinal analysis.

Study 1 main findings showed that children emphasized their own and their peers’ emotional difficulties in coping with restrictions as well as the loss of close contact with their birth families and schoolmates. Nevertheless, they positively evaluated the way RC facilities coped with the COVID-19 restrictions. In study 2, children referred to the same difficulties and the same emotional challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and underlined the increased closeness to their caregivers. Although during study 2 the national sanitising measures were mitigated for the community, this relief was not felt by the children in care, as RC facilities tended to keep the same prevention measures. Further to global quantitative results showing a positive evaluation of SC, some children reported increased difficulties, namely frequent nightmares, and fear of dying or fear of infecting family members.

Worldwide children in RC are an especially neglected group. In Portugal, RC children account for a significant percentage of children whose health and development risk was significantly increased by the COVID-19 pandemic situation. These findings allowed for an evaluation of the fulfillment of the rights/needs of RC children during different COVID-19 restriction periods and will stress recommendations for policy and professional practices in similar situations to assure children in care will not be again forgotten.

Residential care in Portugal: an analysis of the content of the media about the caregivers, in the last 5 years

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The social media have a high impact on society, due to their role in providing relevant information and raising citizens' awareness of social concerns. In Portugal, the representation of residential care in the media seems to reflect and project relevant social images, susceptible to different levels of analysis.

In the Portuguese context, residential care for children and young people takes a special relevance as a measure of protection and promotion, encompassing a significant number of children and young people, compared to other European countries (Browne, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Johnson, & Ostergren, 2006). According to the latest data provided by CASA 2019 report (ISSIP, 2020), there were 6855 children and young people living in residential care in Portugal in 2019.

The recently revised laws for the protection of children and young people at risk in the Portuguese system have defined the legal regime for social intervention by the State and the community in order to avoid dangerous situations and to create promotion and protection measures, in an integrated approach to the rights of children and young people, in order to guarantee their well-being and integral development. Additionally, the most recent legal framework on residential care highlights the role of caregivers in providing the development *of afective secure and stable bounds* (DL 164/2019, article 3). The literature has been highlighting the importance of caregivers for the biopsychosocial development of children and young people integrated in residential care (Fernandes & Oliveira-Monteiro, 2016; Mota & Matos, 2010). The quality of relationship with caregivers, as well as, assertiveness, empathy and availability, can be considered a protective factor, which may allow greater emotional and affective organization (Davis, 2003; Mota & Matos, 2008).

This study aims to identify the main themes addressed by the media about residential care in Portugal and, specifically, to analyze the perceptions served by the media about caregivers, in the last 5 years. The analyses intend to discuss media treatment about the role of caregivers who work in residential care context - a relevant issue in the Portuguese context – and its possible impact. In this sense, a content analysis of a wide field of news underlying the most referenced newspapers in the Portuguese context was carried out. In order to guarantee the scientific rigor of the investigation, the phases of the technique proposed by Bardin (2011) were used, specifically, pre-analysis, exploration of the material and treatment of results, inferences and interpretations.

Four general categories were highlighted that reflect the main themes addressed by the media about residential care in Portugal, specifically, residential care versus family care, characteristics of residential care, legislation and caregivers in residential care. Through the analysis of the general categories, 4 specific categories related to caregivers were also found, namely, the need for training, mistreatment, challenges of being a caregiver and characteristics of care. The news categories stress the importance of family care becoming a primary measure for children and young people at risk, since, currently, there is a primacy of residential care over family care. It is also emphasized the importance of implementing personal development training, capable of training caregivers and offering more appropriate responses to the biopsychosocial needs of children and young people. There is a contradictory view inherent to the role of care in residential homes, where, on the one hand, the media highlights the importance of the existence of affection between caregivers and child, and, on the other, it warns of the fact that these professionals do not replace families, which seems to be a paradox between what is needed and what is allowed for caregivers.

Residential care quality in Portugal: children perspectives

Dr. Sónia Rodrigues (University of Porto), Prof. Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo)

Residential care (RC) in Portugal accounts for 87% of out-of-home children's placements. The lack of studies on the quality of Portuguese RC and the scarce information about how far the available services meet the real characteristics and needs of young people in residential care, make it imperative to carry out research on RC quality in Portugal.

Seventy-four RC centres for children and young people were visited within a nationwide assessment on the quality of the Portuguese RC, using ARQUA-P, which is a RC quality assessment system, based on an ecological rationale, resorting to multi informants (children, caregivers, centres' directors, centres' board members, tutelary agents and the researchers/quality experts) evaluations, a multi-perspective approach, requiring different methods, tools and data collection techniques.

Seven hundred and fifty-three children/youngsters, six years or older, living at those 74 facilities, participated in this study, corresponding to 11.4% all children in RC in Portugal. Data on RC quality were collected using the ARQUA-P interview for children/youngsters. Youngsters over eleven (n= 462) also filled-in SDQ, RSES, SWLS and PWB.

Results showed that children evaluated the overall quality positively. Significant differences and correlations in the RC quality assessments were observed associated to individual participants' variables (such as gender, age, time in care, age and reason for entering care, runaway attempts, siblings together in care, distance from the family home and knowing own life-project) and context variables (such as centre size and gender segregation).

Regarding these children and youngsters' psychological adjustment, results showed that young people in care presented more evidence of maladjustment and less self-esteem, life satisfaction and personal wellbeing than their normative counterparts. Significant correlations were found between RC quality assessment and the youngsters' psychological adjustment, satisfaction with life, personal well-being and self-esteem.

Predictors of RC quality were identified as: being mixed, being supervised and having a positive affective climate, which is the main predictor. Implications for further research and for RC professional practice improvement are discussed.

Residential Child Care – Evidence Review for Research and Practice

Dr. Robert Porter (CELCIS, University of Strathclyde), Ms. Valerie Jans (SOS Children Villages International)

Residential care for children is a subject of much discussion, in particular in relation to its appropriateness as a care setting, following the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care for Children (United Nations General Assembly 2009). In order to consider the relative merits or challenges of residential care, it is essential that we understand the quality, proposed function, and outcomes it produces. To this end, a rapid evidence review (following Khangura et al. 2012) was conducted of literature on residential care published between 2015-2019 inclusive, in English, French and Spanish. A total of 1476 abstracts were sourced, of which 111 papers were included in the final review.

Overall, the papers demonstrated a strong geographical imbalance towards Europe and the USA, with poor representation from the global south. There was also a lack of common themes or approaches, with few papers covering the same settings, measuring the same outcomes, or assessing the same quality criteria. This results in a 'mosaic' of information, with few overarching themes or findings. A lack of consistency in the terminology used, and of descriptions of the setting being researched, make it difficult to know in what settings conclusions were drawn, and to what extent such conclusions could be relevant for other settings in other contexts.

For the majority of studies, function and quality were not a primary focus. However, many different uses of residential care were mentioned, including offering 'respite' care; interim care; or more intensive support or 'treatment' for children with more severe or complex care needs. Domains that were seen to be critical to ensure quality were related to setting, staffing, safety and treatment. Outcomes for children were regarded from a psychological, social, and emotional perspective, with many papers focusing on this topic. Although a large volume of less conclusive evidence indicates that children in residential care are disadvantaged compared to their peers in family settings, clear overall conclusions are difficult to draw due to the use of different methodologies, measures, and research being conducted with different populations and care settings. This is further complicated by variations in cultural and socio-economic factors.

On the other hand, and in accordance with the de-institutionalisation agenda, studies clearly show that children and young people in institutional care are at a disadvantage. However these findings are limited to institutional environments which differ significantly from modern residential care.

The review calls into question the thinking that residential care is necessarily harmful to a child's development or that it brings no added value within a range of care options. At the same time, it highlights that the current state of the evidence is insufficient to conclude that residential care is able to meet care needs that well-supported family-based care options cannot.

In this paper, we discuss the implications for research and practice. There remain significant gaps in our understanding of residential care. Most notably, there is a need to include the experiences and voices of children and young people themselves. Additionally, developing our understanding for whom residential care works, and in what circumstances, would facilitate its appropriate and focused use. Finally, much could be gained from an alignment of terminology, and consistent reporting of the settings and contexts researched.

For practitioners, more guidance is required to determine which care needs residential care is suitable for. Quality criteria should be applied rigorously and consistently across settings, with particular attention to staffing and the ability for children to form positive loving relationships. Residential settings also need to be further adapted and differentiated, not only to adhere to quality features, but also to be able to accommodate more specialised and diverse care needs.

Resilience in residential care: a systematic review of factors related to healthy adaptation

Dr. Micaela Pinheiro (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), CIS-IUL, Lisboa, Portugal), Dr. Eunice Magalhães (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), CIS-IUL, Lisboa, Portugal), Dr. Joana Baptista (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisboa, Portugal)

Research with young people in Residential Care (RC) has been primarily focused on the lack of adaptation and particularly on mental health problems (Jozefiak et al., 2016; Ford et al., 2007), overlooking resilience and adaptation (Lou et al., 2018; Butler & Francis, 2014; Sim et al., 2016). Considering that we cannot change previous trauma experiences and adversity (e.g., abuse and previous neglect; Jones et al., 2011), it is critical to identify factors associated to adaptation of adolescents in RC.

This oral communication is focused on a systematic review aiming to identify the protective factors or the resilience portfolio (Grych et al., 2015) which might be positively associated with adolescents' healthy adaptation in RC. Using a combination of keywords related with residential care, adolescents, resilience and adaptation we have conducted a systematic review and 11 studies were included. The results are based on PRISMA (Liberati et al., 2009) and discussed in the light of the theory on the resilience and adaptive processes of adolescents in RC. Overall, the studies reported protective factors at different levels (i.e., individual assets and resources from different contexts: family, RC and community).

This review highlighted the importance of exploring resilience as a dynamic process of assets and resources, more than as a stable individual characteristic or personality trait. We expect to contribute to a deep discussion about resilience in RC, informing policy making and professional practices in this context.

Keywords: Residential Care, Resilience, Adaptation, Adolescents

REUNIRmais: Assessing the effectiveness of a parenting intervention in family preservation and reunification

Dr. Ana Catarina Canario (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto), Prof. Isabel Abreu Lima (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto), Ms. Sanmya Salomao (University of Porto), Prof. Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto), Prof. Margarida Rangel (University of Porto), Prof. Marina Serra Lemos (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto), Prof. Orlanda Cruz (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto)

In Portugal, many vulnerable families are followed by social services with different actions to promote and protect children. These actions may target family preservation to prevent family breakdown, or family reunification, following family breakdown and child placement in out-of-home care. Families within these services receive heterogeneous interventions as there are no evidence-based interventions (EBI) applied to family preservation or family reunification contexts. To provide these families support through evidence-based parenting interventions (EBPI) is of great relevance, as these promote positive outcomes in parents and children and contribute to their mental health and wellbeing. Some of the most disseminated EBPI are part of the Triple P system. Several studies support the system's efficacy, revealing positive effects of the interventions on children's behaviour, parenting practices and families' social support network. Triple P's interventions can be useful resources to provide parenting support to vulnerable families, particularly Standard Triple P (STP), an individual format EBPI delivered in 10 weekly sessions. To fully understand the potential of STP delivered to Portuguese families to promote family preservation and family reunification, preventing child placement or re-entry in out-of-home care, further research is needed to better understand how effective STP is and what are the STP benefits for different families? The current research project aims to evaluate a sample (at least 150) of children and their primary caregiver (mother or father) of the district of Porto, Portugal, followed by the social services with actions of family preservation or family reunification. Specific objectives are 1) to assess the individual (using psychological and psychophysiological variables from children and caregiver) and familial (such as the quality of the parent-child interaction) factors that contribute to preventing family breakdown; 2) to evaluate the effectiveness of STP in preventing family breakdown; and 3) to identify which children and parents benefit the most from the parenting intervention, according to the differential susceptibility hypothesis and the diathesis-stress model. Data is currently being collected. Preliminary results on the effectiveness of the intervention will be presented according to the data available.

Review of family interventions program when child manifest behavioural problems

Dr. Ivana Maurović (University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences), Dr. Anja Mirosavljević (University of Zagreb)

The intervention system for children and youth with behaviroal problems and their families in Croatia is largely fragmented and not integrated. In other words, interventions aimed at protecting the well-being of a child are implemented to the greatest extent separetly with children/parents. With the aim of increasing involvment of children with behavioral problems in professional support measures for families at risk, we created family intervention program and presented it to practicioners trough series of educations. This program is a part of the project For a Stronger Family, funded by UNICEF Office for Croatia and delivered in cooperation of responsible ministry and the Croatian Association of Social Workers. The program is based on family system theory, social ecology theory and social learning theory. Additionally, program combines insights from the concept of family functioning (Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems; Olson & Gorall, 2003).

In particular, the program details the stages of intervention planning as well as treatment implementation with the whole family when adolescent has bahavioral problems. As family members of those families are often resistant to change and not ready for interventions, special attention in program is given to the ways of enhancing the parents/child motivation for participating in intervention. Thus, alternative and creative methods and techniques are implemented both in planning and treatment phase (for example goal setting cards, role play etc.).

Examples of methods and techniques used by professionals in treatment phase are devided by well known overlapping key intervention ILI LIFE areas in which child/young person may encounter problems: family, personality/behavior, values/attitudes, school, peers, leisure time, addiction.

For example, interventions in the family domain are aimed at fostering balanced family functioning on the dimension of the cohesion and flexibility, as well as clear and open communication. In the domain of personality/behaviour, interventions that can encourage self-regulation of family members are described. Furthermore, techniques for promotion of prosocial values and raising more mature moral reasoning of family members are also presented. In the school domain, interventions that can facilitate better school achievement as well as cooperation of parents with school are described. Similarly, the ways in which practitioner can teach parents how to encourage their children for constructive leisure time and socialization with prosocial peers as well as preventing substance abuse is outlined.

Practitioners evaluated education and principles of the program positively. During presentation, key interventions within the program will be presented.

Key words: family preservation community program, children, youth, behavioral problems, systemic approach

Reviews on child and youth resilience studies

Prof. Adrian van Breda (University of Johannesburg)

Resilience theory and research continues to burgeon globally, despite various criticisms levied against it. The interest in resilience derives largely from researchers becoming tired of conducting research on the vulnerabilities and deficits of people and systems. Such research tends to overlook the increasingly recognised fact that, in the face of vulnerability and adversity, people and systems frequently find ways to achieve outcomes that are better than might be expected. Resilience researchers thus strive to understand the processes, resources and characteristics that enable people and systems to recover and even thrive in the face of adversity, and in some cases to even change the adversity.

While resilience theory has historically emphasised internal strengths and resources of individuals in overcoming environmental adversity, contemporary resilience has widely embraced a social ecological approach to resilience that recognises the importance of resources and processes in the systems surrounding a person and the interactions between these. There is also growing interest in the social ecological resilience of larger systems, including families, organisations and communities. And there is a surge of interest in resilience outside of psychology (where it was primarily concentrated in the early years), including social work, economics, engineering and climate studies.

This symposium reviews various facets of resilience research on children and youth, drawing on presenters from England, Israel and South Africa, each focusing on different aspects of resilience, viz. the role of mentoring and life skills in the resilience of Israeli youth leaving care; the ways possible selves theory (a motivational theory of future self-concepts) may assist in identifying resilience enablers in young people; a systematic literature review on what we know about the resilience of care-leavers across Africa; and methodological considerations regarding interdisciplinary research on child and youth resilience.

This diverse collection of papers on child and youth resilience studies points to the rich and multifaceted potential of resilience to understand the developmental, health and well-being trajectories of young people in various context. It suggests the ways practitioners can leverage these insights to support young people as they journey towards adulthood and to foster enabling environments that enable their full potential.

- The contribution of mentoring to the life skills of youth leaving care in Israel (Yafit Sulimani-Aidan)
- Identifying resilience enabling factors from Possible Selves literature on young people: Implications for practice with care leavers (Sue Bond)
- A systematic literature review of research on the resilience of care-leavers in Africa transitioning to adulthood (Adrian D. van Breda)
- Examining interdisciplinary perspectives on child and youth resilience studies (Diane Levine)

Reviews on child and youth resilience studies – A systematic literature review of research on the resilience of care-leavers in Africa transitioning to adulthood

Prof. Adrian van Breda (University of Johannesburg)

Young people in care can be regarded as among the most vulnerable young people in society, because the life challenges they and their families face not only bring them to the attention of social welfare services, but also result in their being removed from parental care and placed in alternative care. Furthermore, there is some evidence that being in care can be harmful to these already-vulnerable children. And then the transition out of care is frequently abrupt, unprepared and premature. Care-leavers who have transitioned out of care thus enter adulthood at a disadvantage, as is evidenced in the generally negative outcomes they evidence in relation to markers like education, crime and mental health.

However, this is not always the case. There are many care-leavers who fare reasonably well. These care-leavers evidence resilience, which refers to the social processes that people engage in to achieve better-than-expected outcomes in the wake or face of adversity. This paper is interested in understanding the resilience enablers of care-leavers.

The study focuses specifically on care-leavers in Africa, because this is a significantly under-researched population, despite very large numbers of children growing up in care. There is little research on care-leaving in Africa, though this is growing, thanks in part to the work of the Africa Network of Care-leaving Researchers (ANCR) and to the growing commitment to the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child.

A systematic literature review was conducted, drawing on all available literature on care-leaving in Africa, including journal articles, books and book chapters, dissertation and theses, research reports and conference papers. In total 123 documents were identified, 49 of which made reference (even if only in passing) to resilience, suggesting that resilience is a salient theory for understanding care-leaving in Africa.

A systematic review of the resilience findings in these research outputs was conducted and will be presented. Prominent among these is the important role of a range of social support networks that care-leavers draw on, linking closely with the African philosophy of Ubuntu (which in global North terminology is most similar to interdependence). These findings will also be interpreted in relation to policy regarding support for care-leavers and limited financial and human resources, which force care-leavers to rely on informal networks to facilitate their transition towards young adulthood.

Reviews on child and youth resilience studies – Examining interdisciplinary perspectives on child and youth resilience studies

Dr. Diane Levine (University of Leicester)

Adolescent resilience has been studied since the 1970s. However, we have only just begun to unpick the mechanisms by which young people survive and thrive.

Many contemporary children and adolescents are living in extraordinarily challenging circumstances. Climate change, political uncertainty, and chronic social inequality impact on their day-to-day lives in deep ways. This is true of most young people living in the majority world, and for young people living in care in South Africa. While most South African youth face seemingly insurmountable challenges, studies have begun to articulate the distinctive, additional risk and protective factors faced by youth leaving ‘alternative care’.

In the face of adversity, it is increasingly important that we develop new theories of how young people adapt in conditions of chronic structural inequality, and understand how those theories are applicable in real-world circumstances. While this work has begun there are still significant questions left unanswered.

We are caught between the detailed illuminations of neuroscience and physiology, the long sweep of history, the climate-change oriented insights of environmental sciences, and the less predictable but potentially emancipatory effects of sociology, psychology and anthropology. We can no longer rely on single or bilateral disciplinary lenses, or permit minority world perspectives to dominate; nearly 90% of the current evidence about adolescence comes from research in high-income countries.

In this segment of the symposium I propose that understanding resilience requires adaptive capacity in interdisciplinary research processes and practices themselves. By adaptive, I mean values and processes that a) *build*conditions favourable to learning across disciplines and socio-economic chasms, b) offer opportunities for collective *decision-making and revision*, and c) allow sufficient *time and space*for coordination across geo-spatial, linguistic, socio-cultural, and disciplinary divides.

After reflecting on the potential usefulness and contestation surrounding ‘adaptation’, I will propose some ways forward. Specifically, I will reflect on integrative approaches to interdisciplinarity in the context of majority world, non-WEIRD, and African-centred research. Integration asks that we both i) unite ideas and approaches to create a new whole, and ii) consider the nature of the new ‘whole’. Drawing on a range of recent studies, I will interrogate an example of a conceptual framework in which areas intersect and form loci for integration in methods and analyses.

Reviews on child and youth studies - Identifying resilience enabling factors from Possible Selves literature on young people: Implications for practice

Dr. Sue Bond (University of Johannesburg)

Possible selves is a theory of self-concept and behavior motivation. Possible selves theory suggests a that there is a future aspect to self-concept. This future aspect is made up of three components; a hoped for possible self, a feared possible self and an expected possible self. When well developed, these future selves motivate current behavior, towards a hoped for self and away from a feared self. Resilience is defined as the processes that facilitate better-than-expected outcomes in the face of significant adversity. Resilience enablers are the processes and resources that an individual has access to or engages with that contribute to resilience. Recent literature suggests an interaction between possible selves and resilience; possible selves can be enablers of resilience and resilience enablers can contribute to the development of possible selves. The purpose of this paper is to address the question "can possible selves be useful in identifying resilience enablers in young people?" This presentation draws on literature from a database search using the keywords including "possible selves and young people". The database search, while not exhaustive or systematic, suggests that there is little literature available in the field of possible selves and young people, and possible selves and resilience. From the review of 17 articles that answered the keyword search it was possible to identify resilience enablers from the possible selves in several domains. Education emerged strongly as a possible self and education is a strong resilience enabler. Other resilience enablers noted from the possible selves literature included career aspirations, employment, parental support, positive possible selves as parents, achievement or success, the concept of place as a contributor to possible selves, classroom activities, planning and balancing hoped for and feared possible selves. These finding are important in the context of care leavers. I use the findings of the literature review to suggest how the resilience enablers identified from the possible selves literature can be used to inform interventions with care leavers aimed at promoting the interaction between possible selves and resilience.

Revisiting the Child from Back Then. Child Sexual Abuse in Families and Systematic Perspectives on Vulnerability

Prof. Sabine Andresen (Goethe-University, Frankfurt)

The presentation goes back to findings form the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Germany. I would like to investigate how victimised and surviving adults of child sexual abuse talk about their childhoods and their families. The empirical material of the analysis comes from written reports of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Germany[1]. The analysis focuses on two research questions: How do adults report their experiences of the children they once were to an independent commission? What insights into the implications of child sexual abuse for the child can be generated from the memories? Child sexual abuse still constitutes a social taboo (Unabhängige Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs 2019). This diagnosis aims firstly at the barriers in society to effectively protecting children and adolescents, to believing the victimised and surviving children and adolescents and to stopping the abuse, as well as to supporting victimised and surviving adults in coping with the consequences, in a way that is effective and tailor-made to the individual. The concept of 'making taboo' does not refer to the silence surrounding the phenomenon of child sexual abuse, but rather to the dynamics of looking the other way, fading out, covering up and concealing. As a result, victims and survivors are often isolated. Secondly, the diagnosis of making taboo goes hand in hand with the observation that particularly the aspects that confuse power relations and established gender roles are ignored. An example of this is the dismay of male children and adolescents. The facets of making child sexual abuse a taboo contribute to the fact that the complexity of this form of violence in childhood and adolescence as well as its prevalence are not sufficiently understood.

In the first part the procedure of the Independent Commission in Germany should be explained. As its chairperson and as a childhood and family researcher I carried out scientific studies based on the reports of victims and survivors. In the second part I would like to show findings from the analysis of written reports of victims and survivors. The analysis aims to look at how adults describe the vulnerability of the child they once were. Vulnerability results here, in reference to Mackenzie, Rogers and Dodds (2014), from the fact that humans are physical and social beings. This makes them fundamentally dependent, but in certain phases – such as childhood – they are especially dependent on others. How this dependence is structurally shaped is also an indicator of vulnerability.

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Risk of Future Maltreatment or Framing Structural Inequities as Parental Failings?

Dr. Jill Stoddart (Assistant Professor (status only)), Dr. Barbara Fallon (University of Toronto)

Objective: The decision to conduct a child maltreatment investigation based on information received in a referral is one of the many complex decisions workers must make daily. This decision requires the worker to first decide if the report of a concern regarding a child's safety or well-being meets the mandate of the child welfare system, and second, to determine the best way to approach this investigation. This study examines cases investigated in which no incident of maltreatment has occurred, but there are concerns that the child may be at significant risk of future maltreatment. In Ontario, investigating maltreatment is central to the mandate of child protection authorities, however their mandates also include situations where there is no specific concern about past maltreatment but where the risk of future maltreatment is being assessed. The conceptual validity of risk of future maltreatment is debated (Baird and Wagner 2000; Baumann et al. 2005; Shlonsky and Wagner 2005). This study focuses on factors found in the profile of cases investigated despite there being no reported incident of maltreatment. There is limited research on the profile of 'risk only' investigations in Canada (Fallon et al., 2011; Stoddart et al., 2016), and this study provides a follow up of the exploration of 'risk only' investigations in Ontario, Canada.

Methods: The Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (OIS-2018) is a provincial study examining the incidence of reported child abuse and neglect. The OIS-2018 separately tracks maltreatment investigations versus cases opened only to assess the risk of future maltreatment. Investigating workers were asked to complete a data collection instrument for both maltreatment and risk only cases. For cases investigated for maltreatment, workers were asked whether the investigation was substantiated. In cases that were only opened to assess future risk of maltreatment, the investigating workers were asked to indicate whether the risk was confirmed. Bivariate analyses explored the relationship between the outcome variable (substantiated risk and substantiated maltreatment) and each of the predictor variables selected for their theoretical relevance. Multivariate analyses explored predictors significant in the workers' decisions to substantiate a risk only investigation and a maltreatment investigation.

Results: The profile of families substantiated for risk of future maltreatment are different in important ways from families who are substantiated for an incident of maltreatment. The families involved in the risk only investigations are often young, single parents with significant personal stressors, such as drug use, cognitive impairments, and mental health issues. They also have few social supports and unstable housing, including homelessness, coupled with lack of money for basic necessities.

Conclusions: It is important that the services provided to these families reflect their needs, which are different than families who have maltreated their children. Given the impact that the risk only families have on the volume of investigations every year in Ontario, it is critical to assess whether the benefit to these families outweighs the possible risk, to not only the families subjected to such an intrusive service, but also to the children who have actually been harmed and require focused, immediate responses, from an overburdened system.

School and program related factors influencing disclosure among children participating in a school-based childhood physical and sexual abuse prevention program

Dr. Joan Blakey (Tulane University), Dr. Maurya Glaude (Tulane University), Dr. Sheara Jennings Williams (University of Houston)

Objective: School-based child abuse prevention programs were created to provide knowledge so that children can recognize abuse, teach skills that decrease children's risk for abuse, normalize the disclosure process, and provide a pathway for children experiencing abuse to be able to report the abuse. It is estimated that 18% of children in the United States were physically abused, and 9% were sexually abused (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-USDHHS, 2019). Additionally, 14% of children experienced two or more maltreatment types, with 2% experiencing both physical and sexual abuse (USDHHS, 2019). It is estimated that the prevalence of physical and sexual abuse is actually higher as many cases go unreported largely because many children do not disclose the sexual abuse until adulthood (Alaggia, 2010; 2005; London, Bruck, Ceci, & Shuman, 2005). Those children who do disclose the abuse run the risk of not being believed, blamed for the abuse, or accused of tearing their family apart (McElvaney, Greene, & Hogan, 2014). It is imperative that we optimize the likelihood children will feel safe disclosing child maltreatment and that when children disclose, they are believed and supported through the process (Collin-Vézina, De La Sablonnière-Griffin, Palmer, & Milne, 2015; Easton, Saltzman, & Willis, 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore school and program factors that trainers in a school-based prevention program believed were associated with disclosure among youth from kindergarten through 12th grade.

*Method:*Using the qualitative case study method, in-depth interviews were conducted with eighteen trainers and administrators who work with the Play it Safe!® school-based child physical and sexual abuse prevention program. The trainers were from 21 to 65 years of age (average 40 years). Thirteen of the participants were Caucasian, three were Latina, one was biracial (White/Latina), and one was multiracial (African American, Latina, and Native American). Three of the trainers spoke fluent Spanish and conducted training in Spanish. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company. Data analysis consisted of (1) reviewing the transcribed interviews to ensure accuracy and the quality of the information being collected; (2) open coding the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Padgett, 2008); (3) looking within and between cases to disconfirm, corroborate, and identify alternative explanations; and (4) reviewing salient themes to identify and understand plausible explanations across cases to answer the research question (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results: Data analysis revealed three factors that influenced disclosure: school, school personnel, and program features. The school-related factor was the time allotted to the training. The school personnel-related factors were disengagement, ambiguity concerning abuse, prior history with children, and professionals' personal history of abuse. Finally, the program-related factors were the training's core messages, providing specific examples, and repeating the program. To date, there is a dearth of studies that explore the role that schools and school personnel play in the disclosure process.

Conclusion: School-based child abuse prevention programs have shown promise in increasing children's knowledge of preventing abuse and providing a mechanism for children to safely report abuse (Gibson & Leitenberg, 2000; MacIntyre & Carr, 1999; White, Shanley, et al., 2018). We must understand critical factors related to physical and sexual abuse disclosures among children who participated in school-based child abuse prevention programs. Schools play a critical role in the prevention of physical and sexual abuse. Understanding more about schools, personnel, and program-related factors that lead to disclosure is critical to ensuring children's safety.

School project work as enhancing self - esteem and active participation of special needs children in the community

Mrs. Nina Amon Podobnikar (Teaching assistant, Departent of Social Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana)

The article presents two related projects involving elementary school children. Special needs children and their friends and peers (43 pupils) participated in 3–years lasting project. The purpose of these projects was to contribute to the creation and the strengthening of the peer community of these children, and to encourage them towards active participation in the society.

The first project called “Iskrice” (eng. “Sparkles”), was focused on the development of social skills and on the creation of a space where children were able to express themselves and develop a positive self-esteem. Once a week, children aged 9–11 and 12–15 were cooperating and socialising in separate groups. While participating in the project, the pupils developed their communication skills, and shared their current concerns, interests, and strengths with their peers. Meetings also included activities with animals that helped create a pleasant, safe atmosphere for getting to know themselves and one another. The purpose of the other related project called “Prostovoljstvo” (eng. “Volunteering”), was to promote active participation of pupils in the community, outside of the school premises. The pupils who participated in the first project invited other interested pupils from the school to join them in action. The community-oriented activities that we carried out were: peer-to-peer aid, visits to a nursing home, fund collection and visits to an animal shelter, and caring for endangered animals.

The evaluation of these related projects revealed that pupils are eager to participate in such activities and working methods in the framework of school. They underlined their satisfaction with the fact that they had a place to express themselves and get to know both themselves and their school peers. The teachers of the pupils who participated in the project have reported an increase in active participation and association role of the children in their class communities. The realisations of the implemented projects that combine school activities and activities in the local community draw attention to the important contribution of this type of pedagogical activities that are used to help students build quality relationships with their peers while supporting their active involvement in society. Through various activities, children are able to develop positive self-esteem and have the possibility to be an active participant in the community, as well as the strength to accept both themselves and others.

Keywords: school, self-esteem, peers and friends, participation in the community, project work

School student councils: Active educational involvement for at-risk students

Dr. Ester Halfon (Shaanan College of Education, Haifa), Prof. Shlomo Romi (School of Education at Bar-Ilan University/Herzog college ,Jerusalem)

Introduction:
Acting within an educational setting allows students to express themselves and their talents. Action strengthens their sense of belonging to that setting, contributes to their welfare, reduces risk behaviors, ultimately contributing to their future as active, involved citizens. The 1990 Geneva Convention raised awareness to encouraging children to become involved in decision-making procedures and in acting to advance their own unique needs. Consequently, school student councils began being established in many countries, including Israel. The school council is an educational entity that includes students who were elected, in a democratic procedure, by their peers.

R**esearch objective:**To examine, by socioeconomic status (SES) the contribution of the educational activities conducted by the school student council to the development and success of active council members to developing present and future leadership skills and personal characteristics.

Method: Participants were 600 secondary-school students (about 200 boys, 400 girls), of whom some are members of student council and others are not. Of these, 29% are in schools of low SES, and are potentially at risk. The students answered a questionnaire to assess student-council activities in four areas: (a) education for democracy and students' rights, (b) enhancing areas of success, (c) developing leadership and personality skills, (d) relevance of the student council.

Findings: All student-council members perceived their activity as being a relatively high contributor for them, whereas non-members perceived the contribution to members as moderate. This finding is unique in that it reveals that the perception of the importance of social involvement requires active involvement. Having a student council is not sufficient – a concerted effort must be made to direct students to become active members. Membership in the student council is not mandatory – it is voluntary and carries the added value of enhancing the objective of education toward involvement and active citizenship, which could reduce risk behaviors, among them overt and covert dropout. In schools of low and medium SES, *about half* of the non-active students agreed that student-council activity contributes to community involvement, as opposed to *about a quarter*of non-active students in high SES schools. This finding can be understood to mean that students of low and medium SES perceive this activity as a possible, accessible path to enhancing their community involvement, indicating that students of high SES have additional possibilities to be involved . Therefore, it is incumbent upon the education system to create an organized mechanism for establishing student councils in all schools and allocate formal resources for them a social-education coordinator, scheduling hours for council members within the school curriculum, and assigning a room for their activities.

The findings reveal that in schools of low SES, boys' rate of involvement (about 16%) is significantly lower than girls' (about 39%). Conversely, in schools of medium and high SES, the boys' rate of involvement is higher (about 30%), with girls (35%) remaining close to their peers in low and medium SES schools. Therefore, boys from at-risk populations should be actively and deliberately encouraged to be involved in student councils as a path to social and community involvement. The applicability of this recommendation is clear from the relatively high rate of girls who reported that they are active members of student councils.

Discussion and conclusions. The insights gained from this study are important to educators and therapists working with children, as they alert to the importance of organized educational activities to enhance at-risk populations of low SES. Students' involvement in all educational activities, and particularly in the student council, has the added value of reducing the potential for risk behaviors and enhancing their future positive involvement in society.

Secure Futures? Young people's experiences of living in Secure Children's Homes

Dr. Hannah Bayfield (Cardiff University), Dr. Annie Williams (Cardiff University)

Secure Accommodation units, otherwise known as Secure Children's Homes, are residential homes in the United Kingdom which restrict the liberty of young people aged 10 -17 years old who pose a serious risk to themselves or to others. There are twenty Secure Children's Homes across the UK in which young people from England and Wales can be placed either through the justice system or on welfare grounds. Secure Accommodation Orders on welfare grounds are only made if one or more strict conditions are met: a young person has absconded previously and is likely to abscond from other accommodation; if the young person absconds it is probable they will suffer significant harm; if the young person is kept in another accommodation they are likely to injure themselves.

This presentation draws on a research project which explored the life trajectories and lived experiences of young people from Wales referred to Secure Children's Homes. Although the numbers of English and Welsh young people placed in Secure Accommodation across the UK has decreased since 2010, Department for Education data shows the proportion placed for welfare reasons has recently grown, particularly in Wales. This, together with a general lack of detailed knowledge of the journeys of young people into and out of secure accommodation, asks questions of whether the current system best meets the needs of young people.

Our study explored the experiences of young people from Wales referred to secure accommodation between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2018. Ethical approval was given by the university's ethics committee. Data was gained through semi-structured interviews and the examination of young people's social services case files. Over the study timeline 56 secure accommodation orders were made, involving 43 different young people from 21 of the 22 Welsh Local Authorities. Of the 43 young people, 23 were identified as possible participants but complications such as health deterioration or placement moves meant 12 could not participate and 11 interviews took place: nine face to face, one by telephone and another by proxy. Of the nine face to face interviews with young people, seven had a social worker or other professional present due to concerns the interview might upset the young person. Interviews were also conducted with 30 social workers from 17 different Local Authorities who had worked with 32 (74%) of the 43 young people.

In line with previous research, we found that the early lives of many young people referred to Secure Accommodation for welfare reasons were characterised by neglect, abuse, family dysfunction, insecure attachments, bereavement and relationship difficulties. Care entry followed, along with 'high risk' behaviours such as self-harm, violence to others, substance misuse and sexual exploitation. Care placements were then disrupted, with young people usually living in residential homes at the point of secure care referral.

Young people and their social workers highlighted various inadequacies in their care, including trauma experienced during transportation to, admission to and residence at Secure Accommodation. However, our findings also support wider evidence of Secure Accommodation having a positive effect on behaviours and education engagement, with young people themselves suggesting that it was a place they felt 'safe'. Regardless of these potential positives, many of the young people continued to face similar issues on leaving a secure setting to those which had led to the initial Secure Accommodation Order. In examining the lived experiences of our most vulnerable young people, we have an opportunity to see how children's voices are (or are not) heard when they face high levels of risk, contributing to ongoing discourse surrounding the rights of the child and positive care outcomes.

Securing Safety: Young People's views on the use of out-of-home care in cases of exploitation

Dr. Carlene Firmin (University of Bedfordshire), Dr. Lauren Wroe (University of Bedfordshire), Ms. Delphine Peace (University of Bedfordshire)

Objectives: In the UK, when young people are abused in extra-familial relationships, such as being sexually or criminally exploited by peers or adults unconnected to their families, children's services may place them into care at a distance from their home authority to protect them from harm. Using the results of a mixed-methods study, this paper presents young people's views on: the use of distance-placements in cases of extra-familial harm; the conditions in which the practice is experienced as effective or damaging; and how safety is achieved, physically, relationally and psychologically during placement processes.

Method: The Securing Safety project is a mixed-method study into the rate, cost and impact of distance-care placements due to extra-familial abuse involving; quantitative surveys of 13 local authority children's services departments on the rate at which they use distance-care placements due to extra-familial abuse; semi-structured, online interviews with young people (n=9) impacted by, distance placements due to extra-familial abuse in three local authorities in England, and the parents (n=9) and professionals (n=) who have supported them through the process; and online focus groups with administrative staff (n=3) in participating local authorities on the financial costs of distance-placements, alongside analysis administrative data. In this paper the authors present the results from thematic analysis of interviews with young people; set in the context of the project's broader dataset.

Results: Young people, who have been moved into care due to extra-familial abuse, provide a thematic account of the physical, relational and psychological conditions in which this type of intervention has been experienced as effective, and the conditions in which it can further victimise or traumatise them. When viewed within the broader results of this study, these themes trouble notions of 'safety' and 'protection' used by researchers and practitioners when engaging with adolescents who are relatively safe with their families but at risk of significant harm beyond them.

Conclusions: In conclusion, the authors reflect on this by questioning the long and short-term role of distance care placements for young people who have come to harm in their communities and peer groups; presenting the balance to be struck between securing young people's short-term physical safety while also protecting the long-term safety they realise through familial, peer and community relationships. This presents practical and ethical challenges in a UK context where increasing attention is being paid by policymakers and researchers to how child protection systems respond to contemporary forms of abuse that largely occur beyond family relationships. The authors make recommendations for national policy development, as well as call for a multi-country evidence base on the use, and effectiveness of, out-of-home care to safeguard adolescents who have been abused in extra-familial contexts and/or who face contemporary forms of abuse.

Self-assessment and the use of digital technology in the early identification of mental well-being concerns.

Mr. Murray Davies (The Viewpoint Organisation Ltd)

Objectives

To share research demonstrating that 50% of young people in care and care leavers have a diagnosable mental health disorder

To present research demonstrating that parents and teachers in regular contact with young people under report symptoms of mental health disorders

To share evidence that self-report screening of mental health well-being is more accurate than reports of others

To demonstrate how digital technology supports regular mental well-being self-assessment and early identification of concerns about mental well-being

Method

Sharing key findings from research which demonstrates that the mental health of children in out of home care is significantly poorer than that of their peers, with almost half of children and young people in care meeting the criteria for a psychiatric disorder.

Sharing research indicating that parents typically under-report depressive symptoms, that teachers, even with training, nominated fewer than half of students found to be clinically depressed through screening and clinical evaluation.

Sharing evidence that self-report screening of mental health well-being is more accurate than reports of others with examples of self-assessment scales used reliably.

Demonstrating how providing apps to young people in care for use on their devices encourages regular well-being self-assessments and automatic alerts to key personnel allowing the early identification of concerns. Information, which is easily updated, can be provided to young people about their care and well-being. They are encouraged to share successes as well as concerns.

Results

Participants will have had the opportunity to consider research findings demonstrating that the mental health of children in out of home care is significantly poorer than that of their peers.

Participants will also have had an opportunity to consider the research evidence demonstrating the benefits of self-assessments of mental well-being compared with the under reporting of symptoms by parents and teachers in regular contact with young people.

The benefit of providing apps to young people in care for use on their devices to encourage the early identification of mental well-being concerns will have been demonstrated.

Conclusion

The benefits of encouraging the self-assessment of mental well-being and the use of digital technology to support this process will have been demonstrated in the assessment process will have been demonstrated.

Self-report measures of parental psychosocial functioning do not predict further maltreatment of children involved with child protection services.

Dr. Sarah Whitcombe-Dobbs (University of Canterbury), Prof. Michael Tarren-Sweeney (University of Canterbury), Prof. Philip Schluter (University of Canterbury)

BACKGROUND: Decision-making with families who have ongoing involvement with child protection services (CPS) forms an essential part of child welfare practice, but evidence is limited for risk estimation and other assessment methods when applied to individual parents. Many psychometric measures have been validated for use with high-risk populations, but few of these have been trialled with CPS-involved parents in order to ascertain their association with future maltreatment events.

OBJECTIVE: This prospective study explored whether self-report measures of parenting self-efficacy, mood, anxiety, stress, emotional regulation or substance use were useful in predicting subsequent notifications of harm.

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING: CPS-involved parents (N = 26) were recruited to the study, all of whom retained the custody of their youngest child at the time of assessment.

METHODS: Comprehensive data regarding parents' background experiences, parental self-efficacy, mood, anxiety and stress symptoms, emotional regulation, and substance were gathered during a baseline assessment. Notifications of harm were prospectively retrieved from the national child protection database. Psychological constructs, background experiences and demographic factors were examined as potential predictors.

RESULTS: No individual psychological constructs, nor cumulative risk scores, were found to be associated with subsequent notifications of harm among the study sample. Two background factors predicted CPS notifications, namely: having a higher number of children and the parent reporting a personal history of neglect.

CONCLUSION: Self-report measures of mood, emotional regulation, parenting self-efficacy and substance use are unlikely to be useful for PCA when conducted in the context of child protection casework or court assessments. Further studies on PCA and decision-making should ensure that measures are reliable and valid for CPS-involved parents who are undergoing PCA.

Shannon’s Box – Creating a culture of Love and Belonging in Organisations through the Lived Experience of Care

Ms. Jo Derrick (Staf), Mrs. Pamela Graham (Staf)

Staf was established in 1998 by practitioners who were concerned about the difficulties faced by the young people they supported in their transition to adulthood.

Our vision is a Scotland where the wellbeing and success of care leavers is indistinguishable from that of their peers. We do that through ensuring the voice of care leavers is respected; ensuring those supporting them have the time and knowledge to deliver the strong relationships young people require; and by promoting policies that support a Scotland where care leavers are loved, safe and supported.

Shannon’s box is a Staf project delivered in collaboration with East Ayrshire HSCP. Shannon is a care experienced young woman who lives with her son in Kilmarnock. She remembers clearly the day she was taken into care and how she felt about it. Shannon’s Box, an idea designed and developed by Shannon is a box of items selected to support children and young people when they enter care and includes a personal letter from Shannon.

Entering care is a traumatic time for young people, full of the unknown, new faces, a new way of living with different rules and expectations. Shannon used her own experience of entering care, of being removed from her family and siblings, and that of her peers to design Shannon’s Box which she hoped would support a young person entering care. She also hoped that this box would support workers to enable them to both support the young persons on the day of them entering care but also help them to build a relationship with those young people as we know that relationships are key to overcoming adversity and trauma.

At Staf we believe it is important that every young person feels loved and cared for and has strong relationships with those who care for them. Shannon’s box helps to do this for young people entering care and supports the development of these important relationships.

At this presentation we will share more detail on the process of the project and the creation of the Box, and share feedback that has been received by young people and their workers who have received the box. Furthermore we will demonstrate the importance of creating a culture of love and belonging and ways to do this for organisations implementing Shannon’s Box in their local area.

Similar findings, different policies - The Impact of Attachment Theory on Residential Care of Small Children in East and West Germany

Dr. Felix Berth (German Youth Institute)

This presentation examines the history of the infant homes for babies and toddlers in the two German states after World War II. The maximum utilisation of these institutions was not reached in the immediate post-war years, as one might suppose, but in the early 1960s. At that time in socialist East Germany one in forty children under the age of three lived in an infant home while the rate was about half as high in capitalist West Germany. Thus, these institutions were more important for the growing up of children than previously assumed.

In addition to these quantitative developments, the presentation also analyses the influence of the sciences on residential care for babies and toddlers in the Post-War-Era. In both German countries, John Bowlby's early works on Attachment Theory were quickly adopted scientifically, starting soon after the publication of *Maternal Care and Mental Health* in 1951. In East- and West-Germany, scientists carried out longitudinal studies comparing the development of children in residential care, in foster care and in their families (e.g. Dührssen 1958; Schmidt-Kolmer 1960).

Their results led to scepticism about residential care for small children, but the political consequences differed widely. In West-Germany local authorities focused on strengthening foster care instead of residential care for children under three, whereas in East-Germany conflicts at government level emerged, between protecting children and rising female employment. The official data reflect the different policies: In West-Germany residential care for small children disappeared rapidly between 1965 and 1975, whereas in East-Germany the institutions remained preserved until the end of socialism in 1989.

The presentation follows a mixed-methods approach. First, quantitative official data from East and West Germany are analysed descriptively from a longitudinal perspective. This is followed by a comparative analysis of the contemporary research on infant homes by Dührssen (1958) and Schmidt-Kolmer (1960), both of whom pointed out the risks of early institutional care similarly. Finally, based on archival records (GDR) and published parliamentary statements (FRG), a comparison is made of how the political systems reacted to the research findings.

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Keywords:

History of Residential Care, History of Attachment Theory, Child Protection, Comparative History, East and West Germany

Social climate of residential facilities and youth's psychopathology: the role of the youth-caregiver relationship quality

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OBJECTIVES

Youth in residential care (RC) are a high-risk group for mental health problems, namely externalizing and internalizing problems, compared with those living with their families (e.g., Attar-Schwartz, 2008). This heighten vulnerability may be explained both by pre-care experiences (e.g., maltreatment) (e.g., Rodríguez, del Valle, & Arteaga, 2015) and by contextual factors of the RCS (e.g., multiple placements, repeated breakdowns, turnover of caregivers, other youth with mental health difficulties) (Lehmann, Havik, Havik, & Heiervang, 2013). Specifically, increasing attention is being given to the organizational social climate (OSC) of RC settings as a potential determinant of youth's mental health outcomes (Glisson & Green, 2011). Additionally, there is evidence that more supportive staff are associated with lower levels of adjustment problems among youth in RC (Pinchover & Attar-Schwartz, 2014). This calls for examining more complex relationships between those variables. Grounded on an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) with multiple informants (i.e., youth and staff), the present study fills this gap by testing a mediation model exploring the role of quality of relationships between caregivers and youth in the relationship between the OSC of the residential facility and youth's psychopathology (i.e., internalizing and externalizing problems).

METHOD

Participants were 378 youth (163 boys), 12-25 years old, and 54 caregivers (mostly female), 24-57 years old, from 71 RC settings in Portugal. Youth reported on the youth-caregiver relationship quality and caregivers reported on OSC and youth's internalizing and externalizing problems.

RESULTS

Using multilevel modelling, results showed that higher levels of involvement, stress, and authority hierarchy were associated with higher levels of support the youth-caregiver relationship, which, in turn, was associated with lower levels of youth's externalizing problems.

CONCLUSIONS

Results support the mediating role of youth-caregiver relationship quality in associations between different OSC dimensions and externalizing problems of youth in RC settings. Findings suggest that improving the OSC of RC settings could be an effective facilitator of higher quality youth-caregiver relationships, and therefore, contribute to prevent mental health difficulties among youth in RC.

Social pedagogical family support and the best interests of the child (chair: Becker-Lenz) – Child participation in intensive family support interventions: Do adults overestimate the degree to which children feel involved? (paper)

Prof. David Lätsch (Zurich Un)

Chair/contact: Roland Becker-Lenz

Context: Emerging evidence from international research suggests that children tend to be overlooked in many forms of intensive family interventions. In their work with the families, social workers predominantly address caregivers alone, while children and adolescents are often treated as indirect clients of the intervention, that is, interactions with them are intentionally restrained. As a rationale for this practice, it has been suggested that social workers are careful not to substitute for children's caregivers in their parental roles, and keeping interaction with children at a minimum is seen as a necessity in this context. However plausible this assumption may be, there is little research on how children and adolescents themselves perceive this practice and to what degree, under specific circumstances, they approve or disapprove of it. In our study, we are examining how children's perspective on their involvement in intensive family support is intertwined with (i) baseline case, caregiver, worker, and children characteristics, (ii) children's satisfaction with the intervention, and (iii) the development of children's well-being and social functioning over the course of the intervention.

Methods: Data are collected at four different time-points, starting at the beginning of the intervention and covering a total span of 18 months. Caregivers, workers, and children aged 10 years and over fill-in questionnaires. Children's Involvement is rated by all three groups. Data collection is currently ongoing. A total sample of approximately N=100 interventions is expected.

Findings: Preliminary analyses on a subset of the sample show that caregivers and workers report stronger involvement of children than the children do themselves. Controlling for other case and family characteristics, involvement seems to be positively associated with children's satisfaction with the intervention, more internalizing and externalizing problems, and increasing age.

Conclusions: Although based on only a subset of the sample, preliminary analysis suggests that adults may overestimate the degree to which children and adolescents feel involved in intensive family support interventions. We will further explore this finding, discuss potential explanations, and consider strategies to confront it. Future analyses should reveal whether the quantity and quality of child involvement is associated with positive or negative development of case, caregiver and child characteristics during the intervention.

Social pedagogical family support and the best interests of the child: research insights on indication, participation, trust and effectiveness - Children's Perspectives in Family Home Visits of Social Workers: An ethnographic approach

Ms. Simone Brauchli (University of Zurich)

Session chair: Prof. Dr. Roland Becker-Lenz

Family home visits of social workers aim to ensure the best interests of the child by supporting parents in their efforts to structure daily routines and in solving their family problems. Even if professionals of the child protection system identify a problem in a family, the question of what this problem is exactly and how it have to be solved, is part of negotiations between social workers and the family members. How are the children able to participate here? In how far do they get the opportunity to express their experiences and to bring in their perspectives into family support? (How) are their experiences and perspectives taken up and dealt with by the social workers? How are they put into relation to parents' experiences and perspectives? These questions are answered analyzing audio-transcripts and observation protocols of an ethnographically informed study on family home visits in Switzerland. The data collection was carried out in two families during up to ten months on a total of 14 appointments in one family and 16 appointments in the other.

As it will be shown, the children's problem perspectives were an integral part of the clarification process by the investigated provider of family home visits. However, this had little practical impact on the work with the families, which took place mainly between experts and parents. Although the parents' perspectives were only partially compatible with the children's practices documented in the audio transcripts, the former were an important reference point for the social workers. It is argued that social practices represent an important opportunity for children to express their experiences and thus point out moments of oppression in the families, that would be difficult or even impossible for them to verbalize. At present, however, they are not yet sufficiently considered by the professionals.

In some situations, professionals got information about family practices from the children that could be interpreted as a child endangerment. Such situations are a delicate issue for professionals. They have to decide whether they make those the subject of a problem negotiation or if this is too risky in respect of the parent-child relationship.

Social pedagogical family support and the best interests of the child: research insights on indication, participation, trust and effectiveness – Professional challenges of trust building processes in mandatory social pedagogical family support settings

Prof. Roland Becker (University of Applied Sciences and Arts North Western Switzerland / School of Social Work), Ms. Fabienne Rotzetter (University of Applied Sciences and Arts North Western Switzerland / School of Social Work), Dr. Joel Gautschi (University of Applied Sc), Ms. Cornelia Rüegger (University of Applied Sciences and Arts North Western Switzerland / School of Social Work)

Contribution to a collective paper session, chaired by Roland Becker-Lenz (roland.becker@fhnw.ch)
Background: The importance of trust between clients and professionals for effective interventions in helping professions is well established in the literature. Nevertheless, empirical studies on trust building processes between professionals and clients in child and family work are scarce. While building trust is challenging in any professional relationship, it is even more demanding in mandatory interventions. Further, it is not clear if, in mandatory settings, achieving trustful relationships is a realistic aim at all. In our research project, we study trust-building processes in mandatory social pedagogical family support measures in child protection. Our presentation will focus on the challenges of establishing trustful working relationships with parents and children. We will speak about personal and setting factors as well as about dynamics that support or prevent trust relationships.
Methods: In our in-depth qualitative-research study, we are using extensive data material from mandatory social pedagogical family support interventions in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Our sample consists of comprehensive data from six cases. In each case we recorded counselling sessions at two or three moments in the counselling process (one or two in the beginning and a last one after several months). Additionally, we conducted semi-structured interviews with family members and counsellors after each recorded session and we collected case files documenting the cases' histories. Our data originates from four service providers that were sampled by type of organization and professional approach. We are analysing the material with "Objective Hermeneutics", a reconstructive approach for sequential microanalysis of text material.
Results: Our preliminary findings indicate that trust is an important issue in working relationships between family workers and family members in social pedagogical family support settings, even – or especially – under mandatory circumstances. In our analysis, we identified supporting and preventing factors on the level of interpersonal relationships. The matching between the specific needs of a client and the particular characteristics of a professional seems to be an important trust facilitator. Needs of clients can be related to interests for particular help, but also to characteristics of a person, such as appearance, way of communication etc. However, social pedagogical family support is not restricted to a single client-professional relationship. Our findings are pointing to the importance of how professionals are shaping the setting of the intervention. It is crucial, if and how professionals involve different family members. Decisions and actions that are made in the beginning can have long lasting consequences for establishing trust and for the working relationships in general. Efforts to foster trust of a certain family member can restrict the trust of another, depending on the family relationships. However, the scope of how these settings can be shaped is restricted by case specific goals, problems and situations, which are often imposed by contextual factors. This poses formidable challenges for family workers, who deal with them in different ways.
Conclusions: We will discuss how these results add, deepen and modify the current discussion on trust in family work and in mandatory social work settings in general. For professionals our empirical results might serve to

facilitate reflexions on this challenging and crucial issue.

Social pedagogical family support and the best interests of the child: research insights on indication, participation, trust and effectiveness – research-based indication for social pedagogical family support

Prof. Marius Metzger (Luc), Mr. Anoushiravan Masoud Tehrani (Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, School of Social Work, Lucerne, Switzerland)

Session chair for the collective paper session : Prof. Dr. Roland Becker-Lenz (roland.becker@fhnw.ch)
Titel: Research-based Indication of Social-pedagogical family support

Objectives: Despite the importance of social pedagogical family support as a commonly assigned help for families, no indication criteria for when to provide this kind of support have been established so far. In the present study, such indication criteria have been worked out. These indication criteria are intended to facilitate the decision making process for or against an allocation of social pedagogical family support.
Method: A qualitative research approach was realized by using content analysis of 60 structured interviews with 30 social services professionals and 30 family support providers based on their experiences with supported families. The indication criteria were weighted and led to three types of predictions: low, medium or high prediction for suitability of social pedagogical family support. The prognostic validity of these three types of predictions was checked through 15 social services professionals and 15 family support providers based on 15 cases.
Results: As a result, the following indication criteria for the suitability of social pedagogical family support have been found: willingness to cooperate, development potential, ongoing familial problems, achievable fitting, clarified mandate, integration into support system, guaranteed financing and quality of family support. These indication criteria were weighted differently so that a prediction for a low, medium or high potential for the suitability of social pedagogical family support could be made. The calculated prognostic validity was stable (Kendall's T = .753, $p < 0.0001$, 95% CI = .621 to .844, $R2 = 0.567$).
Conclusions: With the weighting of the indication criteria, a low, medium or high prediction for the suitability of social pedagogical family support could be made. This potential assessment allows a fairly stable prediction for the suitability of social pedagogical family support, which, however, is not perfect. It is still possible that even families with an ostensible low potential for the suitability of social pedagogical family support could benefit greatly from this kind of support in the long term. Due to the general unpredictability of case histories, it is not legitimate to refuse the access to social pedagogical family support even to families with a low potential for the suitability of this kind of support.

Social Safeness and Pleasure Scale: Validation studies for adolescents from community and placed in residential care homes

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Social safeness has been proposed as the individual's perception of the social world as being warmth and soothing. The lack of social safeness has been suggested as a transdiagnostic socio-emotional vulnerability for several mental health difficulties. To date there was no study addressing experiences of social safeness in adolescents. The psychometric properties of the Social Safeness and Pleasure Scale (SSPS-A) were investigated in a community adolescent sample and in a sample of adolescents living in residential care homes. The community sample was composed of adolescents recruited from regular schools (208 boys; 224 girls). A second sample was composed of adolescents placed in Portuguese residential care homes (145 boys; 154 girls). Results indicated a measurement invariant one-factor solution as a good fit across all samples. Moreover, internal consistency values were excellent for all samples ($\alpha > .93$) and evidence for construct validity in relation to external variables was found. Further analyses revealed significant differences between all tested groups. Community adolescents reported higher social safeness in comparison to adolescents placed in residential care homes. Within both samples, boys scored higher in the SSPS-A when compared to girls. These findings provide evidence on the SSPS-A validity and its use across diverse adolescent samples.

Solid yet flexible: utilizing youth's perspective to design employment opportunities for youth with experience of the child welfare system

Ms. Katie Horton (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Annie Smith (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Stephanie Martin (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Maya Peled (McCreary Centre Society)

Objective: Engaging vulnerable and at-risk youth populations in employment has many challenges, particularly youth with experience of the child welfare system (e.g. foster care; McCreary Centre Society, 2014). Therefore, it is critical to gain an understanding of the best practices and policies to implement when designing employment which can support this population (Buckle & Simpson, 2013). This presentation focuses on a model for supportive employment that seeks to offer higher level skill development and stability for youth with experience of the child welfare system.

Method: Incorporating the suggestions and evidence gathered from experiential young people, McCreary started the Youth Research Academy (YRA). The YRA is supported employment designed for youth, aged 16–24, either currently or previously involved in the child welfare system in Vancouver, Western Canada. Participants in the YRA learn community-based research skills (such as survey design, data entry, data analysis, report writing), as well as general workplace skills such as conflict resolution, teamwork, and time management in a supportive and professional environment.

The evaluation of the YRA entails a self-report survey at intake and another at discharge which the first cohort were involved in developing. In addition, each cohort creates a clay-animation film at the start and end of their involvement in the YRA, reflecting their experiences in the Academy.

Results: Since its inception in 2016, the YRA has consisted of five cohorts of 6–8 youth whose work has focused primarily on projects relating to improving outcomes for youth currently or previously involved with the child welfare system.

Evaluation findings to date indicate that youth's participation in the YRA has provided not only an opportunity for them to learn research skills and transferable skills but also a sense of purpose and meaning. Participants reported benefitting from employment opportunities which were beyond those traditionally open to them such as retail and food service. Program graduates have gone on to secure meaningful employment, completed high school and moved into post-secondary education. Many have stayed connected to the agency and have participated in additional employment opportunities as youth researchers.

Conclusion: To effectively engage youth who have had experience with child welfare in employment, it is important to support them not only in gaining specific work skills but also in developing transferable skills, such as communication, conflict-resolution, and teamwork. It is also vital for a workplace environment to find the balance of holding youth to a standard and supporting them to achieve this standard, but also allowing for flexibility and understanding of youth's cumulative life experiences. If these are in place, the likelihood increases that youth will not only gain skills but also overall personal growth. As voiced by the youth participants of the YRA, this initiative also highlights the importance of creating employment opportunities that give youth a sense of professionalism, as these opportunities can be difficult for youth with limited employment experience to find.

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Special needs education and mental health: The case of children in private foster care.

Mrs. Iben Bolvig (VIVE - The Danish Center for Social Science Research), Mrs. Tine Louise Mundbjerg Eriksen (VIVE - The Danish Center for Social Science Research), Ms. Mette Thorsager (VIVE - The Danish Center for Social Science Research)

Several studies have shown that children placed in foster care or other out-of-home placements obtain significantly lower academic achievements and experience far lower levels of well-being and success in life. Previous research find that children placed out of home are over-represented in special needs education (SNE) and this is indeed also the case in a Danish context where 31% of all children aged 11-16 in foster care have received SNE during the school year, whereas only 5% of their peers in the population have.

With substantial exposure to SNE and yet poor academic achievements and well-being it is relevant to estimate the effect of receiving SNE for this target group. In this paper we investigate the effect of SNE on the children's wellbeing measured by psychological strengths and difficulties. We handle the problem with negative selection into SNE by an instrumental variable method using cross-time municipal variation of the amount of SNE among all children in lower secondary school as an instrument for the foster child's amount of SNE. It is our assertion that a large part of the variation in the instrument is driven by idiosyncratic municipal differences for instance determined by strategic decisions made by the local school authorities.

Using a sample of 12-16 years old children in foster care, we find strong negative selection into SNE with higher probability of receiving SNE among children with lower academic test scores and lower psychological wellbeing (specific with more conduct, hyperactivity and peer relationship difficulties). When accounting for this negative selection, we find evidence that receiving SNE reduce the hyperactive difficulties among children in foster care.

Stability in residential out of home care: What is it and how can we do it?

Ms. Jenna Bollinger (Monash University)

Objective: Explore and develop an understanding of stability in residential care, including what elements are required to provide stability.

Background: Despite universally worse outcomes for care leavers than their non-care peers, there is an assumption that those in residential care fare particularly worse than those in other types of care. Empirical evidence, however, does not necessarily support that assumption. According to the research, there is either little difference in outcomes between residential care and foster care, or some positive effects found for those who have been in residential care. Placement stability has, to date, exclusively been examined in foster care, leaving residential care a neglected area. Placement instability has been found to be linked to greater use of mental health and psychiatric facilities and increases in anxiety and depression. Placement instability can lead to externalizing behaviour difficulties, such as aggressive behaviour or property damage. Multiple placements have been found to reduce executive control, which relates to the ability to self-regulate emotions and behaviour, while other researchers found that as unique foster placements increase, a child's ability for inhibitory control decreases. Therefore, as placement numbers rise, it appears that young people become more behaviourally dysregulated, and have less capacity to inhibit problematic behaviours or regulate their emotions.

Historically, stability has typically been measured in a 'placements-over-time' format, measuring outcomes based on numbers of placements in a given time period. This measurement approach cannot take into account any elements of quality of the placements. Therefore, by ignoring the quality of the placements, what is potentially being measured is not stability per se, but rather a period of time in which a young person has not changed placements. This may not be the same thing.

Method: A qualitative framework was used to investigate into the meaning of stability in residential care and if it can be achieved. Interviews were conducted with 13 staff members, who worked as youth workers 'on the floor', clinicians, managers and directors. Interviews were also conducted with 8 young people who had left care who had experienced varying amounts of instability.

Findings: Both staff and young people identified remarkably similar elements that constituted stability. Those concurrent views provide significant evidence that there are elements that are integral to a young person experiencing a placement as stable that extend beyond simply being in a placement for an extended period of time. Factors that contributed to stability included consistent staffing, reduction in use of casual staff, consistent co-residents, consistent expectations, support provided to staff to be able to work under pressure, and organisational approaches to minimise poor placement decisions. There were very few areas of disagreement between the staff and young people, however, some areas were discussed by only one group or the other, such as the need to prioritise peer relationships. Through the research, a model of stability emerged, depicted as a 'stable house' that incorporates the multiplicity of factors involved. This model provides a road-map for increasing stability for young people, based on the words of young people and staff who were interviewed.

Conclusion: The findings have policy and procedural implications for organisations running residential care programs. Organisations will be able to prioritise the factors that contribute to stability and minimise the factors that contribute to instability, which should have long-term positive impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of young people in residential care. These implications will be discussed in light of the findings and the extant literature.

Staff in CYC as “family” or “professional system” providing family-like function? Challenges using a system-oriented approach

Mr. Zsolt Balázs Major (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary, Social Communication Doctoral School, Phd candidate), Ms. Éva Pap (Bokréta Children’s Home), Ms. Anna Gyetvai (Bokréta Children’s Home), Ms. Zsuzsa Horváth (Győr-Moson-Sopron County’s Child Care Center)

In childcare nowadays there is more and more focus on the support of professionals. In parallel, we think increasingly that children in child and youth care (CYC) are not victims but experts in their own life.

Based on this approach we found a method which increased the number of family reunions 3 times higher in a given group-home in Hungary then it was before and resulted in improvement in all possible relation of cooperation: within the staff, with children, within siblings and with biological family too. Furthermore, the staff’s evaluation of their efficiency and their job satisfaction has improved also.

Our main concept is that behavioral problems of a child are only symptoms, reactions to their environment as a system. The aim of the interventions using this approach is to support and develop the systems around the children. The main principle is that if the environment serves well the children’s needs and interests, the symptoms become “unnecessary”.

To achieve this, all members of the system, including professionals, children and the members of the biological families should be supported to become able to recognize and use their own resources. If every, or even, only one more member of the children’s environment’s system changes into this direction, it will have positive effect on every other member of that given system, including the child itself as well, by increasing on that way the available resources for everyone to cope better with their own challenges in the future.

The theoretical framework is based on and derived from the family therapy’s approach and the system theories’ approach. But it poses some crucial questions.

How can we use this approach, as the staff in a children’s home biologically are not the family members of the children? How can we support the staff to provide family-like functions even staying authentic in their real position?

This chain of thoughts leads us to the role of psychology in CYC too. The psychologists are – based on the specialty of their profession – in some manner in a “(semi-)outsider” position, which allows them to use a wider perspective during the intervention. But it needs an innovative way of thinking from the leaders of CYC institutions as well. As we know well, this need results in many places in a polemic about the “target” of the psychological intervention – is it directly the child, or may it be the complex system and its members around the children? Further, many times it results in discrepancy even in the psychologist’s self-identification.

In this paper, we present a newly designed system-oriented organizational development method implemented into practice in two children’s homes in Hungary. Namely, a “train the trainer” training project targeting directly the psychologists and/or consultants working in CYC, which holds concrete tools about implementing this approach into real practice via supporting and developing the team of a children’s home by the psychologists, and parallel supporting the children and their family in the same time (when it’s possible). We believe that applying this system-oriented approach in the practice – as it fits more closely into the children’s actual reality – can provide possible dissolutions for the mentioned discrepancies, increase the quality of staff’ caring activity, finally helps more efficiently the children to become able to live their own life, what is no else than the final purpose of CYC.

We present also possible, mostly qualitative measurement methods of this development process’ efficacy, and the preliminary results of the pilot implementation of it – with an emphasized focus on the clarification of the mentioned conceptual discrepancies.

Step by step progressive approach towards for enhancing social bonding amongst children and young adults living in residential care

Dr. Aude KERIVEL (VIPS), Dr. volha Vysotskaya (University of Luxembourg)

How do children and young adults perceive their social bonding in a residential care context? This has been the starting question of the research project Social capital of children in residential care.

The research has identified how children "develop" their social capacities alongside

anumber of mandatory (birthday celebrations, sports at living premises, etc.) as well as informal events (sleep-overs at friends, cinema outings, etc.). The analysis shows that while some children have already interiorized characteristics for socialization, other children, who have more risks to be in vulnerable situations, attempt to learn, acquire experience of social exchange step by step.

Our research is part of the theoretical framework of Serge Paugam about bonding social/social attachment. "People linked to others and to society not only to ensure their protection against vagaries of life 'count on', but also to satisfy their vital need for recognition, source of their identity and existence as people 'count for" (Paugam, 2018 p .114)

The results mobilized for this presentation come from an action-research aiming not only to produce useful knowledge in the field but also to co-construct actions resulting from recommendations, and then to evaluate their effects.

Such objectives imply a collaboration between research team, head of the institution - able to develop the school project - and professionals in the field - having proximity with children and young people and guarantor of the development and implementation of realistic and achievable actions.The materials we will use were collected in a survey conducted in 2019 in six children's villages and homes of the Action Enfance foundation. In addition to in situ observations, interviews were carried out with about fifty children and young people from 8 to 18 years old, but also with the professionals who surround them (referent educators, heads of services, night watchmen, hostess). In addition, individual sociograms[1] and questionnaires were completed by 148 children / young people and their referent.These data have enabled the writing of case studies of children, pre-adolescents, and adolescents that we can place on a scale ranging from children and young people with the most social ties to those being the most isolated.Four indicators and a typology make it possible to allocate each of the children and young people, -the fact that parents have or do not have accommodation rights- the fact that children or young people spent nights outside the place of placement or that they did not have the opportunity,- the fact that they have an adult (s) to rely on, or not-the internalization of relationship standards and degrees of proximity, or not Finally, a typology of relationship networks enable to classify children and young people as having a relationship network: restricted and exclusive, dense and exclusive, restricted and plural, dense and plural. The latter being the only one to protect from isolation.

[1] We therefore proposed to each child or adolescent to fill in completed by is in case kids were too young a tool that we called an individual sociogram, composed of a central circle in which the child / adolescent must write his name, which is surrounded and linked to 9 other circles representing the spaces of socialization: children's village or home, family, current schooling, former school, vacations, former place of placement, leisure, neighborhood and others.

Students’ experiences of an Australian education program for students in out-of-home care

Ms. Indra Townsend (Monash University), Dr. Emily Berger (Monash University), Prof. Andrea Reupert (Monash University)

Children and young people in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) are amongst some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society. They have typically experienced significant trauma (e.g., child abuse) and adversity, which can have devastating and lasting effects on all aspects of their development and wellbeing, including their education. The poor educational outcomes of these children are well documented, with research suggesting that children in OOHC frequently experience poor educational attainment, leave school earlier, are less likely to complete high school or go on to higher education, and have poorer academic performance compared to their non-care peers.

To understand how students in OOHC fare educationally and at school, it is crucial to listen to the voices of these students. By understanding the perspectives of students, policy makers, organisations, and schools can shape education programs and policies that best meet the needs of OOHC students. This presentation will explore a specialist education program for students in OOHC through the eyes of the students enrolled in the program. It will examine students’ experiences of the program, the perceived effectiveness of the program, areas for improvement, and other learning, emotional and behavioural concerns of students enrolled in the program. The research design assumed a qualitative methodological approach, using semi-structured interviews with the students to identify potential strengths and weaknesses of the program. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to guide the research and data analyses.

This presentation will cover the experiences of the students involved in the program, the aspects of the program students consider to positively impact on their educational experiences (if any), and the aspects of the program students suggest need to be improved or changed to support their educational needs (if any). The implications of these results will be highlighted, alongside recommendations for improvements in the content and delivery of programs for students in OOHC.

Studying subjective well-being and experiences of children in out-of-home care in Finland – methodological and ethical reflections

Dr. Pia Eriksson (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare), Ms. Päivi Korhonen (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare), Prof. Tarja Heino (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)

In Finland the interest in both subjective well-being and the perspective of the children has lately been rising. Knowledge on the lived experiences of children in out-of-home-care is important both in order to safeguarding their rights and providing qualitative care. The methods of gaining access to the voices of children in care raises many ethical and methodological questions.

This presentation is based on experiences from an on-going national study (2019-2021) carried out by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. In the study survey-data is collected on the subjective well-being and experiences of 10-17 year old children. The study covers all children in long-term out-of-home care in 103 municipalities. Both children in residential and foster family care are included in the study.

The presentation discusses ethical and methodological questions in studying a vulnerable and hard to reach group of children. Especially ethical questions associated with the chosen research design are scrutinized. In this design the child´s own social worker play a crucial role in the data-collection as the anonymous survey-data is collected in a meeting between the child and the social worker.

Further the used methodology is discussed in relation to a research interest in sensitive issues related to abuse and neglect among a hard to reach and vulnerable group of children. Preliminary findings on experiences related to these sensitive issues among children in out-of-home-care in Finland is presented.

Substantiated Maltreatment: Key Factors that Influence Worker Decision-making

Dr. Jill Stoddart (Assistant Professor (status only)), Dr. Barbara Fallon (University of Toronto)

Objective: The decision to substantiate child maltreatment is one of the many complex decisions workers must make daily. Utilizing data from the Ontario Incidence Study 2018, this paper examines what child, family and environmental characteristics workers paid attention to when making the determination that a child had experienced maltreatment. This study adds to the Canadian body of research on factors that influence the decision to substantiate maltreatment by exploring the Ontario population.

Methods: The Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (OIS) is a provincial study examining the incidence of reported child abuse and neglect in Ontario. The primary objective of the OIS is to gather reliable data regarding the rates of investigation and substantiation of maltreatment. This study utilizes secondary data from 2018 cycle of the OIS. To examine the rates of substantiated maltreatment, bivariate and multivariate analyses were conducted.

Results: Caregiver risk factors, uncooperative parents, cognitive/physical and mental /emotional child function concerns all increase the likelihood of substantiation. The decision to substantiate current maltreatment was strongly influenced by the workers' assessment of the future risk of maltreatment.

Conclusions: When using the harm, risk, evidence model suggested by Cross and Casanueva (2009) to theorize the results, one could argue that very few of the factors found in this model would be considered items that are evidentiary. Assessing risk focuses on future behavior while substantiation decisions concern current behavior (Pecora, 1991; Wald & Woolverton, 1990). This study adds to the research which has found that a worker's assessment of the risk of future maltreatment influences their decisions regarding substantiation. Has the spiraling focus on risk resulted in a focusing bias, in which workers place too much importance on their assessment of the child's future risk of maltreatment, and pay less attention to the harm that has already occurred to children?

Success' trajectory on family reunification practices: an inclusive care workers' view

Ms. Diana Neves Teixeira (Center for Psychology at the University of Porto, Portugal), Prof. Isabel Narciso (Faculty of psychology, University of Lisbon), Prof. Margarida Rangel (University of Porto)

The family reunification involves a complex process that begins before the child placement into care and continues until after child home return. During this time, the foster care professionals have the opportunity to empower the children, their families as well prepare them for the child' return to the family dynamics and context. However, this work can be marked by several challenges and so learning about factors that influence the family reunification' trajectory well succeed is crucial. The knowledge about this process can and should be enriched with the experience and prospects of all professionals that work in residential care.

This study aimed to explore the perspectives of foster care professionals on factors influencing the reunification' process and to understand how the intervention practices could potentialize the continuity of the pos-reunification. For reply to research question - according to the perspective and experience of foster care professionals, which are the main factors that contribute to family reunification trajectories of (un)success? - we developed a qualitative study with 5 focus-group and 33 participants. In order to apprehend perspectives and specificities of different work experiences for achieve an inclusive view, this participants group include 14 professionals that work in residential care with case manager functions, 8 professionals of specialized team in family work, and 11 professionals that work in residential care with child' daily care functions. The organization of participants in focus-group regarded professional hierarchy for avoid possible pressure or participation' inhibition, so we had 3 focus-group with technical professionals and 2 focus-group with educators professionals. In addition, it is important to mention that in Portugal, children are placed mostly in residential care and that care workers are divided into a group with higher academic training (mainly psychologists, social workers), that have case manager functions and another group, without specific training, that have daily care functions but is rarely heard by researchers. Through a thematic analysis of data, we define a group of factors that have impact on reunification' success in different systemic' levels, namely intervention system' level, family' level and child' level, highlighting de importance of child preparation for reunification. Furthermore, after explore data, we consider that professionals have a central role in reunification trajectory. We emphasize also, based on the data, the relevance of transition between care and family lived as continuity path, through integration of this changes in child' life cycle and the existence of a post-reunification support, instead of experience ruptures between live in care and return to family. Moreover, an axial analysis to understand the relationship between categories focused on work with families, lead to define specific factors that will be central for future assessment and intervention in family reunification' process. Through the conceptualization of the factors identified, we create a hypothetical theoretical model that show a relationship between professional' practices and their contribution for change motivation of those involved. Specifically, we propose that the assessment and intervention should be closely connected and sensitive to family singularities. In order to achieve powerful professionals' practices, the care workers can be based on a connection between collaborative context, comprehensive knowledge (integration a big diversity of information) and focus on family. So, this triangle of interconnection will be responsible for the improvement of the family' reflexibility and their agency, which is in dialectical association with an intrinsic motivation for change.

In conclusion, the factors' set found in this study and the careful reading of connections between them, give us reflections and information that can improve the knowledge of care workers for add to their practices and, consequently, improve the success of the family reunification.

Suicidality Among Youth in Residential Care: Impact of the Love Notes Curriculum

Dr. Anita Barbee (Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville), Dr. Becky Antle (Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville), Dr. Laura Frey (Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville)

Background: The presenting research team built on a previous CRCT engaging 1,448 youth (14-19) to test the efficacy of a healthy relationship curriculum, *Love Notes*, in reducing risky behavior in vulnerable youth including those in the foster care system in the US. We consider this work to be primary prevention of future family violence, including child maltreatment by targeting high risk youth. The curriculum engages youth through the use of multiple modes (e.g. artistic expression) in response to research based information about attending to family baggage, personality and expectations and how those impact relationship formation, maintenance and dissolution; how neurochemicals are affected by feelings of connection, love and sex; indicators of control, abuse and violence in partners; how to navigate sexual encounters safely including safeguarding emotions, engaging in consent, and contraception to prevent pregnancy and disease, etc. Each module encouraged youth to discuss topics with a trusted adult. Those in the *Love Notes* condition were significantly less likely than others to engage in risky sexual behaviors (e.g. no condom or birth control use, multiple partners), experience a pregnancy or experience dating violence up to a year after the intervention. A follow-up study added content on suicide prevention among other topics.

Objective: One objective of the follow-up study was to test the efficacy of added content on suicidality to the *Love Notes*curriculum and how exposure to information about suicidality prevention in the context of a healthy relationship curriculum affects suicidal ideation and behavior. Therefore, this talk addresses mental health of young people (14), especially those in residential care settings (8), and as they and similar vulnerable youth transition to adulthood (16).

Method:527 youth between the ages of 14 and 24, 111 of whom were living in a residential care facility, 137 of whom were currently or had previously lived in foster care, 32 of whom were homeless, 121 of whom were participating in an educational and career service program to help former foster youth, juvenile justice involved youth, and high school drop outs prepare for independence as well as 130 youth involved in special afterschool programs in impoverished neighborhoods participated in *Love Notes*. A pre-post-post quasi-experimental design was utilized. Youth completed surveys at three points in time (baseline, immediate post, 3 months post intervention). 60% female, 38% male, 1.9% transgender and 1.7% non-binary, gender non-conforming, while 22.5% identified as LGBQ. 78% identified as people of color (58% African American, 6% Asian, 6% American Indian or Alaska Native, 8% Hispanic) and 22% White, Non-Hispanic. 60% were between the ages of 14 and 18 and 40% were between the ages of 19 and 24.

Results: Before beginning the program, youth were asked about experiences over the past month: 19.1% had a desire to die, 14.1% had ideation, 11.2% had a suicide plan, 8% had intent to follow through with that plan, and 7.5% had attempted suicide. The number of youth reporting each suicide-related experience over the past month decreased in the post-curriculum surveys. Exact McNemar's tests determined that there were statistically significant decreases in the proportions of those who experienced a desire to die (10.2%, $p < .001$), ideation (5.3%, $p = .003$), and planning (6.1%. $p = .004$) in the past month pre- to post-intervention. There was a trend for fewer attempts after participation in LN (3.9, $p < .09$).

Conclusions: This is a promising approach to exposing youth with foster care, juvenile justice, or school dropout involvement and/or homelessness to suicide prevention information in the context of a healthy relationship curriculum. Implications will be discussed.

Supply-Induced Demand and Black/White Differences in the Use of Congregate Care: Evidence from the United States

Dr. Fred Wulczyn (University of Chicago)

Racial disparities in child welfare systems are well documented. Compared to White children, Black children are more likely to be reported as maltreated, more likely to have a maltreatment report substantiated, and more likely to be placed in out-of-home care. Black children also leave foster care at slower rates. Although these particular disparities are widely acknowledged and well-researched, other forms of disparity have attracted far less attention. For example, although Black children are more likely than Whites to be placed in congregate care, little is known about why this is so. Because the clinical benefits of congregate care are uncertain, Black/White differences in the use of congregate care warrant more focused scholarship.

To understand Black/White differences in the use of congregate care more thoroughly, we adopt a two-stage model. Stage I examines the relationship between the *supply* of congregate care and the demand for congregate care measured as the number of congregate care admissions. To measure whether demand is supply induced, we adopted a method, called convergent cross mapping (CCM), that tracks the relationship between admissions and discharges over 758 weeks. Theory predicts that if demand is supply induced, admissions and discharges rise and fall together, in process called coupling. We hypothesize that children will be more likely to go into congregate care, all else being equal, in counties where the supply effect is strong (i.e., admissions and discharges are coupled). For Stage II, we built a multilevel model that predicts placement into congregate care. Placement into congregate care refers to whether a teenager entered congregate care at some point during their out-of-home placement. Individual-level covariates include race, age, history of placement, and gender. At the county-level, we use a measure of urbanicity, population-level measures of social disadvantage, and the supply effect from the stage I analysis. We also included state random effects to account for between-state differences in congregate care utilization.

Our analysis was organized around supply effects and Black/White differences in congregate care utilization. From the stage I analysis, we found a strong evidence for supply induced demand: admissions and discharges are strongly coupled. In the second stage, simple linear regression models show that Blacks are more likely to enter congregate care. Adding age and prior placement history reduces the gap but not substantially. In the saturated multi-level model with supply effects included, the Black/White difference is reduced in large measure because Black children are more likely to live in counties where supply effects are strong. When Whites live in places where the supply effect is strong, they too are more likely to go into congregate care. I

Supply effects imply that the supply of congregate care beds induces demand. Our results suggest that where admissions and discharges are strongly coupled (i.e., the supply effect), entries to congregate care are more likely. Results also show that Blacks live in counties where supply effects are present; Whites tend to live in the places where the signal is weaker. Efforts to reduce disparities often focus on decision-making processes. Our research suggests, however, that efforts to reduce disparities should consider how the supply of services affects utilization.

Support in the workplace: how relationships with bosses and co-workers may benefit care leavers and young people in care

Dr. Laura Arnau Sabatés (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)), Prof. Robbie Gilligan (School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin)

It is widely recognized that care experienced youths may find challenges in accessing necessary social support when they are transitioning into adulthood. In most cases, the support from their families is unavailable and the formal support scarce. Most of the time they need to rely on informal connections (sometimes weak) and/or find new supportive relationships through their social network. Work could be considered an important arena where they might meet new people to build their own wider support network.

This presentation highlights the value of workplace relationships (bosses and co-workers), for care experienced young people and how these relationships (often unrecognized) could offer them new connections beyond the care setting, support, and other positive experiences and, sometimes, provide them with a larger and long-term social support network.

Findings presented drawn from a wider qualitative cross-national study (Ireland and Catalonia) aimed at exploring the key factors that young people in care reported as being helpful for them to access and make progress in the world of work (Arnau-Sabatés & Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan & Arnau-Sabatés, 2017). 22 care leavers between 23 and 33 years old (mostly mid-twenties), who had successful experiences in the world of work were interviewed.

Fourteen of the 22 young adults referred, in an explicit way, to having a good relationship with some employers and managers (current and previous) and also with some of their co-workers, and seven of them reported still being in contact with such work colleagues even where they had left the relevant workplace. None mentioned difficulties with colleagues although this was not a specific focus of questions or the study since it was seeking to investigate what participants had found supportive in their progress.

Findings showed that there were two types of support from workplace colleagues identified in the responses of participants:

Firstly, there was support offered to the participants in the performance of their work roles. This support includes showing trust, giving recognition, mentoring and encouraging participants in developing work-related skills (hard and soft skills) in order to help them to increase their employability capital. In this case, the employers/ managers were central.

The second type of support involved both managers and co-workers and is related to friendships both inside the workplace, and in social life outside work. Sometimes, such friendships with managers and colleagues also endured even after the participant had ceased working in the particular workplace. This second form of support illustrates how the workplace may be a source of relationships which help to extend and strengthen social networks for the young people involved and may all be important resources for social inclusion.

The presentation will conclude by reviewing some implications for practice and research in the area of work support.

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Supporting the mental health of care experienced young people - identifying appropriate outcome measures for use in mental health research.

Prof. Gavin Davidson (Queen's University Belfast), Dr. Paula Jacobs (University of Edinburgh), Mr. Luke Power (University of Edinburgh), Dr. Pearse McCusker (University of Edinburgh), Dr. Claire McCartan (Queen's University Belfast), Dr. Autumn Roesch-Marsh (University of Edinburgh), Prof. John Devaney (University of Edinburgh)

Background: While there are increasing concerns about the mental health and well-being of children and young people in general, there are particular concerns about young people who are care experienced. There is substantial evidence of the need to support care experienced young people in relation to their mental health. However, one of the challenges for mental health research is the lack of an agreed set of outcome measures that are used routinely and consistently between disciplines and across studies and contexts in order to build a more robust evidence base of young people's needs, and whether interventions are effective.

Methods: This study involved a systematic review of the literature, alongside a survey of national and international disciplinary and professional experts, to identify and agree a common core set of measures to be used in mental health research with care experienced young people. Phase 1 of the study involved a review of reviews of the published literature of studies that assessed the suitability of mental health and wellbeing measures with children and young people. We were particularly interested in measures that have been used in the context of children and young people with care experience, including children and young people with developmental disabilities or neurodiversity.

Phase 2 of the study involved a Delphi method to survey national and international experts from policy, practice and research spheres, to identify and reach a consensus on a common core set of measures to be used in mental health research with young people who are care experienced.

The review was supported by a diverse group of care experienced young people who helped to guide how mental health should be defined, and the acceptability and usability of the identified measures.

Findings: Clinical definitions of mental health are restrictive and not fully supported by the experiences of young people themselves or research. The study highlighted the need to use a range of tools that gather information about both mental health and broader well-being. The needs of care experienced young people with developmental disabilities or neurodiversity are a particularly under recognised group, and the use of tools that capture their needs and experiences is particularly important.

Conclusions: By seeking to use an agreed set of mental health and well-being measures in research involving care experienced people there is a greater likelihood of building a comprehensive understanding of the diversity and totality of needs, and better evidence about how to meet these needs effectively.

Sustaining a successful Collective Impact approach to improving outcomes for youth aging out of child welfare services

Dr. Annie Smith (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Maya Peled (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Stephanie Martin (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Katie Horton (McCreary Centre Society)

Objective: Since 2014, a group of approximately 20 young people with experience of government care (child welfare services) in Vancouver, Western Canada have been working together with statutory and non-statutory agencies to improve outcomes for youth transitioning out of care, using a Collective Impact framework.

Method: After two years of working together to develop a common agenda, shared measures, and an action plan, the Collective appointed McCreary Centre Society (a community-based research organisation known for its leadership in youth engagement) to co-ordinate the work of the Collective and support the Collective Young Leaders (a youth-led organizing committee).

The Collective has a governance structure co-led by a youth-adult partnership (strategic advisory committee) and the Collective Young Leaders. There are currently over 60 agencies—including the local school district, employers, post-secondary institutions, housing providers, employment support programs, and youth service providers—engaged in the initiative. Most participate in one of five inter-sectoral clusters (working groups) which have a youth and adult co-chair. Each cluster meets monthly to improve outcomes for youth transitioning out of care in the specific areas of housing, employment, education, meaningful connections, and health and culture. Each youth and adult co-chair report to the whole Collective quarterly.

McCreary Centre Society is responsible for evaluating the initiative, including through the use of a longitudinal survey which follows youth through the transition out of government care and into young adulthood.

Results: The Collective has made significant progress improving outcomes for local youth and has garnered international interest from other jurisdictions wishing to replicate the model.

The initiative has directly or indirectly (through the work of partner agencies) achieved a number of successes to date. These include the provision of a ‘transition kit’ to all youth leaving care, the creation of an annual ‘Market Place’ event which connects youth transitioning out of care that year with employers, post-secondary institutions and service providers; the development of a Graduation Fund; the development of an Opportunities Fund; the introduction of post-secondary supports; enhancements to the welfare benefits available to youth following their transition out of care; access to no-cost leisure passes; the appointment of a housing navigator; the creation of supported employment opportunities for care leavers; and the development of regular social gatherings where youth preparing to transition out of care can socialise with peer mentors who have previously navigated the transition process. A COVID task force has also been established by the Collective to support partners respond to urgent needs including food insecurity, housing loss and lack of access to technology.

The evaluation of the initiative captures the Collective’s success in achieving outcomes and also captures the developmental progression of the Collective. This has shown that, over time, youth and adults have reported increased trust and collaboration, and decision making by consensus is proving effective. However, data such as the local Homeless Count, and the population-level British Columbia Adolescent Health Survey show there are still significant discrepancies between the health and well-being of adolescents with government care experience and their peers without such experience.

Conclusion: The Collective Impact model recognises that improving outcomes for youth who transition out of care requires the long-term collaboration of multiple stakeholders across complex and often siloed systems. Such an approach can have success where more isolated and less collaborative approaches have been unsuccessful.

This presentation will discuss the successes and challenges of the Collective's youth-adult partnership approach, and the applicability of the model in other settings.

Symposium: Child and Youth participation in residential care and adoption. Paper: Child participation in protection systems: What do children and family judges say?

Dr. Manuela Garcia Quiroga (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso)

Collective paper session: Child and youth participation in residential care and adoption (Contact person and presenter: Manuela Garcia-Quiroga)

This paper explores the areas of participation of children who have suffered violations of their rights, and are subject to protective measures, with respect to the decisions made regarding their care. This research is situated within the framework of new social studies on children (Vergara, A., Peña, M., Chávez, P. & Vergara, E., 2015; James, A. 2007) and research on decision-making in protection systems (Benbenishty et al, 2015; Bouma, López, Knorth & Grietens, 2018; Cashmore, J. 2002; Horwth, Kalyva& Spyros, 2012).

In Chile, at least 32.5% of children living in alternative care have undergone several changes in care placements (an average of 1.8 previous placements in residential programs and/or foster families). Recent studies in this country point out that between 36.1% and 42.9% of children in alternative care establish a secure link with their temporary caregivers (García Quiroga, M. & Hamilton-Giachritsis, C., 2017) and international literature indicates that this relationship has a potential for repair (Woodhouse, S., Miah, A., & Rutter, M., 2018; McCall et al., 2010). However, little is known about the attitudes that underlie decision making in the field of alternative care in Chile and about the possibility of children to be informed and have a voice in these decisions which affect them.

Objectives: 1) To explore children's narratives regarding the concept of participation and their stories about care decisions and their participation in them. 2) To describe family judges' perceptions of decision making and child participation. Methods: The research design is qualitative, considering as methodology a puppet workshop and group interviews with children and semi-structured interviews with family judges. Results: Preliminary information from the pilot study is presented regarding perceptions of children about their participation in the protection system and the perceptions of judges about child and youth participation in decision making.

Key words: Child participation, Protection, decision making, children

This presentation is part of the following funded research projects:

FONDECYT INICIACION Nº11190298: Participation of children and adolescents in decision making in alternative care protection systems: Incorporating the voices of different actors in the process . DI Emergente PUCV No. 039.376/19 “Child participation in protection systems”.

Symposium: Children‘s voices heard or hurt? How family features and assessment characteristics are intertwined: Preliminary results from a Swiss case file study

Ms. Rahel Portmann (Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, School of Social Work, Lucerne, Switzerland), Ms. Julia Quehenberger (ZHAW), Dr. Andreas Jud (University of Ulm)

*Context:*Empirical data shows that families with a lower socioeconomic status are overrepresented in child protection (Pelton, 2015). Children from poor families not only have a higher risk of being neglected than children from stable socioeconomic backgrounds, but they are also regularly confronted – to their detriment – with biased professional decision-making (Enosh & Bayer-Topilsky, 2015). In this study, we examine how family features and specific assessment characteristics in child protection services (CPS) assessments are intertwined.
*Method:*The sample includes six CPS in Switzerland responsible for assessing reports of alleged child maltreatment. Files in the organizations were randomly selected throughout a one-year reference period. The study team then coded these files using a predefined coding system consisting of variables that operationalize case characteristics, processes and decisional outcomes.
Findings: In line with international findings, families on social assistance are overrepresented in this child protection sample compared to the overall Swiss population (between 1 % and 7.5 % depending on regional variation). Preliminary analyses showed 27.8% of families in the sample being on social assistance (n=180). Moreover, these families experienced higher rates of mental illness and more often had an uncertain residence status. Regarding assessment characteristics, more missed appointments were observed and more documents were produced during the assessment of families receiving social assistance.
Discussion: Preliminary results suggest that families receiving social assistance differ in specific family and assessment characteristics from others. We will discuss to what extent these differences can be assumed to respond to the special needs of children in poverty. It is clear that in assessment and decision-making processes efforts are needed to respond adequately to the special needs of children and families resulting from the circumstances they are living in.

symposium: Errors and Mistakes in Child Protection. presentation: Dysfunctions and their effects on children and young people in the French child protection system

Dr. Hélène Join-Lambert (Université Paris Nanterre)

This presentation is based on a literature review which was conducted with Gilles Séraphin. It will be introduced with a description of some specificities of the French child protection system. In France, 80% of child protection measures are court ordered, with over 50% of them relating to out-of-home placements. In most situations where children are placed, the parents retain parental authority and hold legal rights as users of child protection services.

Different types of dysfunctions affecting children directly have been identified:

- Institutional child abuse in child protection has become a major topic in 2019, when a documentary film was shown on TV, and led to associations of young people in care or care leavers starting to openly talk about the issue, and the government putting in place some measures to address it. Prior to this, only few cases had become public, although cases of sexual abuse within child protection institutions, committed either by adults or by fellow protected children had been documented. It seems that this was due not only to children's fear that their testimonies are not taken seriously and cases will be dismissed, but also to practitioners' fear of being sacked for revealing details of abuse.
- In 2004 and 2005, two highly publicised trials over of sexual abuse of children within their families highlighted the difficulties involved in considering and analysing children's statements. In the Outreau trial, it turned out that children had accused adults wrongly, while in the Angers trial, children had covered up for their guilty parents.
- In another case that became very mediatic, an 8-year old girl named Marina died at the hands of her parents in 2009. Although the maltreatment had been lasting since her birth, and several professionals had reported on it, investigations showed nothing and no protection measure was put in place. Again, in this case, the girl always defended (and even protected) her parents during these inquiries. The investigation which was made after her death showed a chain of dysfunctions within the system.
- Another dysfunction has also been identified in terms of support at the end of care: adolescents who are not ready for autonomy, either in terms of decision-making or in their everyday life and are unable to enter the labour market and become economically independent. There is also a lack of information for young people leaving the child protection system about the support they can apply for. Furthermore, the context of public sector budget cuts makes it more difficult to extend support beyond the age of 18.
- Also, in France, interests of children are perceived to be opposite to the interests of their parents, and decision-makers are perceived as prioritizing one against the other. Our review also suggested that some decisions which affect the lives of birth parents, turn out to be a result of dysfunctions.

These types of dysfunctions will be discussed in line with some results of research, and with measures which have been taken to improve the system and to better protect children.

Finally, the presentation will address some questions arising from this study. These dysfunctions mean that the aim of the child protection system is not achieved: some children have not been protected from dangers that were identified too late, although in several instances, the children themselves had been heard and their perspective was listened to. So how can the children's perspective help us to protect them while ensuring that their right to participation is addressed in a way that is meaningful to them?

Symposium: Ethical considerations when looking at the perspective of the child

Dr. Hélène Join-Lambert (Université Paris Nanterre)

In the field of social sciences, since the rise of sociology of childhood, the perspective of the child has now clearly become a research topic of its own. This conference shows that the same is true in the field of child protection: more and more frequently research focusses on, or at least includes, the children's and young people's perspective.

Furthermore, within child protection systems, taking into account the perspective of the child in decision-making procedures has become mandatory in many countries.

These aims of listening to children and young people raise some concerns among researchers, as we realize that child protection is a specific context where service users are likely to be "vulnerable" because of their social, economic, cultural positions. Moreover, children in child protection are seen as needing to be protected, which in itself involves that they have particular vulnerability.

This symposium will address the balance between vulnerability and agency that we are looking for when we ask children and young people in care about their perspective. How vulnerable are they actually, and how does this fit with the aim to give them a voice? Can we guarantee that our research is not making them even more vulnerable? Can we make sure that their voice is really the expression of their own perspective, notwithstanding the influences that other people might have on them? How much interpretation does it need from us to understand their voices, actions, and silence?

This symposium brings together researchers with different levels of experience, who have used different approaches to listen to young people, from Chile, Finland, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The concerns about ethics, vulnerability and agency of children and young people in care will be discussed together with young people and followed by a related workshop on children as partners in research.

Symposium: Ethical considerations when looking at the perspective of the child (chair Helene Join-Lambert) - Listening to the “Opinista”? Attention to voice and silence in a multi-perspective narrative study of child psychotherapy

Prof. Claudia Capella (Universidad de Chile), Prof. Janet Boddy (University of Sussex)

‘Listening better includes hearing silence and that silence is not neutral or empty.’
Lewis (2010, p20)

When studying children’s complex lives, we must recognise their experiences (and their accounts of their experiences) as both relational and generational: ‘we do not only function as individuals’ (Phoenix et al 2017, p26). This paper reflects critically on the concept of ‘child voice’, in research and psychotherapeutic intervention, through a longitudinal qualitative case-based narrative analysis of the experience of an eight year old girl from Chile, pseudonym Rocío, who was receiving psychotherapy following intra-familial sexual abuse. Rocío was a participant in a larger qualitative longitudinal study of 40 young people (6-18 years old) who were referred into psychotherapy in specialized public SENAME centres for the treatment of sexual abuse. The study as a whole was focused on the content and phases of psychotherapeutic change, and involved qualitative interviews with children and young people; their parents/caregivers; and their psychotherapists. Interviews took place at different points in therapy (after 10 months, after 14 months and finally after 20 months at the end of therapy). Interviews followed open-ended topic guides to explore change and the experience of therapy; children’s interviews also involved making a drawing and a graphic thermometer, to complement and scaffold verbal narratives (for further detail, see Capella et al. 2018).

In her first interview, in a drawing task, Rocío drew a picture herself using a neologism in Spanish, the “*opinista*” – the one who has opinions (and who may choose to speak, or not). Prompted by her invention, we use the concept of the *opinista* to think critically about the conceptualisation of child participation – and notions of ‘child voice’ – in research, in psychotherapy, and in family life. Centring on diverse and shifting narratives of a critical moment in Rocío’s therapy, our case-based analysis illuminates the complex entangled relationality of ‘child voice’ as a concept, and the methodological importance (and challenges) of attending to the ways in which children are constructed and positioned by important (and intimate) others. By linking analysis of interviews conducted with Rocío, and with her mother and psychotherapists, over a period of approximately 12 months, the researcher is able to ‘listen better’, as Lewis (op.cit., above) observes, attending to what is said and unsaid, and by whom. Integrating family- and child-centred methodological approaches makes it possible to move beyond an individualised conception of ‘voice’, accounting for relationality without privileging adult articulations of children’s experiences – and allowing the *opinista* to be heard.

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symposium: Ethical considerations when looking at the perspective of the child - presentation: Young people’s experience of power in care and in research

Dr. Hélène Join-Lambert (Université Paris Nanterre), Prof. Janet Boddy (University of Sussex), Prof. Rachel Thomson (University of Sussex)

Across national contexts, research shows that young people who live in child protection facilities often have negative experiences of power relations (Wolff, 1999; McLoad, 2007, Robin, 2013). As researchers who are looking into young people’s lives, it is crucial that we acknowledge the lack of agency and participation that is experienced by young people in care even more than by other young people. Drawing on this, we conducted the ELTA project (Everyday Lives and Transition to Adulthood) within the Marie Curie IEF programme. We devised a shortitudinal, qualitative and cross-national approach which was designed to empower young participants during the research process (Join-Lambert, Boddy & Thomson, 2020). The qualitative, picture-based approach we have used in this research aimed at gathering the everyday experience of young people through their own eyes. This allowed us to find out what seemed important to them, rather than imposing our own topics for discussion.

Within the project, case studies of 16 young people aged 16 to 18 and living in care were conducted in England and France, including three interviews with each young person within a time frame of 6 to 12 weeks and one with their caregivers. We called this repeated interviewing over a short period of time “shortitudinal.” Altogether, 74 interviews (including consultation interviews) were conducted between December 2013 and September 2014. The methodology included interviews based on social mapping, guided walks, and digital photos as supports for narrative interviews, and texting as a way of keeping in touch. The way in which some of the young people addressed the request to take pictures of their everyday life and to talk about them was not always as we had planned it. However, their reaction is an indicator of the control they felt they had about their participation in the study. So this method was an efficient way of giving control over the topics they wanted to discuss.

We argue that using this method enabled insights into the ways in which young people were able to create or protect agentic spaces within the constrained everyday lives of child protection. The repeated meetings over a short period of time gave young people the opportunity to anticipate the topics they wanted to discuss with the researcher. Even though this anticipation was not necessarily conscious, their choices were not made randomly. In answer to our question “what is important in your everyday life?” and with the help of social maps and digital cameras, we were able to collect narratives of young people in France and in England. Many of the pictures, places and people they showed and talked about gave us insights into areas where they felt powerful, and able to resist decisions that disempower them. In this presentation we will show some examples of these areas of their everyday lives, including physical, social and digital spaces.

Finally, we will reflect on how the ethical issue of power and disempowerment in research led us to understand empowerment in young people’s everyday lives. In our study, young people in France and England described different ways of how they had power over their lives. Rather than comparing the French and English care systems, these elements suggest that systems could be further explored in the light of power relationships. Thus, the cross-national qualitative *shortitudinal* approach raises the power issue as an overlapping feature of growing up in care, and results show typical spaces which might deserve some re-consideration when thinking of everyday life in care.

Symposium: The added value of prioritising children’s and young people’s perspectives in research (symposium: Chair Nikki Luke) - (Re)configuring family? Learning from care experienced mothers who have experienced child placement

Prof. Janet Boddy (University of Sussex), Dr. Bella Wheeler (University of Sussex)

This paper explores meanings and experiences of ‘family’ for young adult women who are both care experienced and mothers of children removed into care or adoption. It draws on a national evaluation of a UK Department for Education (DfE) funded intervention programme called Pause.

Pause is a national NGO which, from its central organisation, supports local practices that deliver relationship-based practitioner support to women who have experienced removal of at least one child; currently have no resident children and are not pregnant; and are judged to be at risk of further removals of children. Pause was established in 2013, and was funded through the DfE Innovation Programme to enable further scale up and diversification, including the development and implementation of a care leaver pilot, targeting young women (16-25 years old) who have been in care and experienced one or more children being removed. The Pause model is predicated on trauma-informed intensive relationship-based practice, delivered over an 18 month period. In 2018, we were commissioned to conduct an evaluation of Pause, utilising a multi-method approach including professional stakeholder interviews, analysis of administrative data, and qualitative longitudinal interviews with women who have worked with Pause. This paper focuses on interviews conducted with women who were part of the Pause care leavers’ pilot. We interviewed 15 care experienced women up to four times over a period of up to 18 months. The sample was drawn from five Pause practices in England; the women had an average age of 23.7 years at the time of interview and the average number of children they had was 1.5 (range 1-3).

In this paper, we presents a narrative analysis which is informed by three main areas of research: research on parenthood for care experienced people (e.g., Roberts, Maxwell & Elliott 2019), child welfare literature on parental and maternal experiences of child placement or adoption (e.g., Broadhurst and Mason 2017; Morriss 2018), and meanings, and gendered understandings, of parenthood, motherhood and young motherhood, within sociological and allied literature (e.g., Thomson et al. 2011; Rudoe 2014). The women’s accounts provide rich insights into the dynamic intergenerational complexity of family and the intersections of past, present and imagined futures. They also highlight the continuing challenges of managing family relationships that are distinctively complicated and shaped by the experience of care systems, as well as the critical significance of support (including from Pause) in managing that complexity over time. Examining women’s understandings and experiences of motherhood illuminates how this is managed and practiced within an ongoing (re)configuration of family over time. As they practice family at-a-distance, women manage and maintain identities as mothers separated from their children, taking account of different permanence, placement and contact arrangements. We conclude by reflecting on implications for conceptualisations of parenthood – and particularly motherhood – and for policy and services to support care experienced people who become parents.

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Symposium: What can epidemiological data on child maltreatment tell about the perspective of the child?

Dr. Andreas Jud (University of Ulm), Dr. Barbara Fallon (University of Toronto), Mrs. Susanne Marlene Ulrich (German Youth Institute), Dr. Svein Arild Viis (UiT - The Arctic University of Norway)

In administrative data, agency or professional surveys, professional decisions on substantiating maltreatment or providing services are not only based on the needs of the child and its family but significantly affected by caregiver cooperation, organizational factors like size of the agency, by local policies or jurisdictional legislation. Researchers have even criticized that some decisions are not primarily driven by the best interest of the child and rather depend on factors that relate to an agency's necessity of collaborating with the parents or other caregiver. Additionally, some child characteristics, e.g. ethnicity, may rather reflect biased decision-making than an association with children's need. This symposium explores the contribution of child needs to decisional outcomes in comparison to caregiver or external factors. Discussions will also cover the need to better document the child's perspective in epidemiological data on agency responses to child maltreatment.

Symposium: What can epidemiological data on child maltreatment tell about the perspective of the child? - What determine children’s influence in a child protection investigations

Dr. Svein Arild Vis (UiT - The Arctic University of Norway)

Introduction: The study aim is to twofold. First we wanted to identify how children participate in child protection investigations in Norway. Secondly we aim analyze to what extent children’s participation influence the outcome of the investigation.

Methods: The study is a retrospective casefile study (N=1365). The extent and type of contact between social workers and the child was coded by researchers. The coding instrument contained information about (i) the child and the family, (ii) characteristics related to the types of concern in the referral and (iii) the number of times social workers had seen the child and consulted with the child and (iv) the decision outcome.

Analysis: Logistic regression analysis was used to determine the impact consultations with the child had upon substantiation of the concerns in the referrals, while controlling for information from other sources, i.e parent, health care, and school.

Results: Children were consulted in 73,6% of the cases where the child was 6 years or older. Social workers are more likely to consult with girls compared to boys. Whether or not the child was consulted varied according to the contend of the referral. Consultations with children increase the likelihood that referrals related to physical child abuse and parenting problems was substantiated. Substantiation of problems relation to the child’s health and social problems were better explained by consultations between social workers and school or health care services. Substantiation of problems related to socio-economic factors and problems within the family were best explained by consultations with parents.

Conclusions : There was no direct association between the decision to provide services and whether or not the child had been consulted. However, when the child had been consulted it did affect whether or not the initial referral was substantiated.

Implications: Including the child in the investigation must be considered instrumental in order to determine the extent of the problem and providing services for children and families.

Symposium: What can epidemiological data on child maltreatment tell about the perspective of the child? – Regional variation of substantiation decisions in German child protective services and the risk of unequal chances of children to receive support

Dr. Andreas Jud (Univeristy of Ulm), Dr. Thomas Mühlmann (Techniche Universität Dortmund), Dr. Franziska Meinck (university of ed), Prof. John Fluke (University of Colorado)

Objectives

Since 2012, Germany does collect child protective services' (CPS, «Jugendamt») data on alleged cases of child maltreatment in accordance with §8a of the German Social Code VIII (§8a SGB VIII) at a national level. This study will be the first to disentangle the impact of child characteristics at the case-level from the effect of organizational and social-structural variables on substantiation decisions. Moreover, it will be one of the few studies worldwide to include these three types of predictors in a nationwide analysis of child protection decision-making. By including several indicators at the macro level that refer to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) the study further contributes to the understanding how indicators of this worldwide initiative affect the functioning of public services.

Methods

The study analyzes German national administrative data on alleged child maltreatment cases in 2016 as gathered by Germany's Federal Statistical Office and the Statistical Offices of the Federal States. Independent variables (IV) are distributed on different levels – the case, the local CPS agency, and the county («Kreis»). Therefore, multi-level modelling is used to identify the contribution of the IV on the substantiation decision. As most CPS agencies overlap with a single county, two levels are analyzed, the case and the county level. Case-level factors include type of child maltreatment, child gender, child age, and child's residence type. Additionally, secondary level data contain the size of the organization, the distribution of professionals' age, county poverty indicators, number of divorces per 1000 residents, percentage of non-German citizens, and percentage of children in day care for all 401 counties in Germany.

Results

136.925 cases of alleged child maltreatment were assessed in 2016 for child maltreatment (CM) of which total of 45.777 cases (33.4%) were substantiated. Another third of cases (34.0%) were not substantiated, but categorized as in need of support while another third of cases were categorized as neither substantiated nor in need of support (32.5%). Preliminary analyses suggest a substantial variation the rate of substantiated cases at the county level. While poverty indicators tend to increase the substantiation rate, a higher rate of non-German citizens decreases the rate. Further analyses will reveal if these factors of needs and biases at the social-structural level are echoed by needs and biases at the level of child characteristics.

Conclusion

Organizational and social-structural variables play an important role in professional decision-making in child protective services and potentially override regionally comparable decision-making based on child needs. Unfortunately, the German administrative data on reported incidents of alleged child maltreatment are particularly poor on child characteristics. Academics should insist on policy-makers to include more data on the child to better analyze if needs are adequately served.

SYSTEMATICALLY IMPLEMENTING CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENT'S VIEWS IN PUBLIC SERVICES – A COMPLEX INTERVENTION

Prof. Anita Salamonsen (Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare - North (RKBU North), Faculty of Health Sciences, UiT The Arctic University of Norway), Dr. Rolf Ahlzen (Department of political, historical, religious and cultural studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Karlstad), Prof. Bente Heggem Kojan (Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences, NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology), Prof. Merete Saus (Department of Education, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education,UiT - The Arctic University of Norway), Prof. Renee Thørnblad (Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare - North (RKBU North), Faculty of Health Sciences, UiT The Arctic University of Norway), Dr. Petter Viksveen (SHARE - Centre for Resilience in Healthcare, Department for Quality and Health Technology, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Stavanger)

Background

To understand and develop various aspects of user involvement is crucial to be able to explore and implement children's views in public services and research. User involvement is legally enacted in child welfare and protection services, family welfare services and mental health services for children and adolescents. It has been claimed that this development reflects broader ongoing cultural and social changes with respect to power, democracy and positions. However, there may be gaps between legal ideals and reality. The understandings of the concept of user involvement in services involving children and adolescents have been characterized as complex, context-dependent, and fundamentally blurry. In the same line of argument, implementing and practicing user involvement in public health and social services may be perceived as a contested field, and user involvement as a complex intervention.

Objectives and Methods

In the Norwegian context, new laws establishing children's rights to be listened to and involved in decision-making are currently being determined. At the same time, the Norwegian child protection services and mental health services for children and adolescents have been heavily criticized both nationally and internationally for not exploring or respecting the perspectives of children and their families. We have explored this intriguing, important and underexplored paradox in a discursive literature study conducted in an intersubjective group of six researchers from different Scandinavian universities. Central discourses and their possible implications have been identified both in empirical and theoretical contributions to the literature on user involvement in child welfare, child protection services and mental health services for children and adolescents.

Results and Conclusions

Underexplored gaps between legal ideals about children's involvement and how children's perspectives actually are acknowledged in child welfare, child protection services, family welfare services and mental health services in the Norwegian context were identified. Based on the identification and discussion of central discourses relevant to children's and adolescents' involvement in these services, we argue that to be able to actually reveal and include children's perspectives, it is of crucial importance to recognize these gaps between ideals and realities. We introduce a table of different levels of involvement in Norwegian services including children and adolescents which may make it easier to evaluate user involvement in the services. Furthermore, we suggest a tool with sets of reflexive questions that different stakeholders may find useful in understanding and implementing children's and adolescent's subjective perspectives and informed decisions in social work and mental health care contexts.

Take care of you, to take care of others: Early findings of a Compassionate Mind Training program for caregivers

Ms. Laura Santos (University of Coimbra, Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive and Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Ms. Sofia Nogueira (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Prof. Maria do Rosário Pinheiro (University of Coimbra, Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive and Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Prof. Daniel Rijo (University of Coimbra, Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive and Behavioral Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra)

Adjustment and well-being of youngsters in Residential Youth Care (RYC) are associated with both positive social climate and interpersonal relationships with caregivers, as well as the well-being of caregivers. Although having a key role in the daily intervention in RYC, caregivers face many challenges related with youngsters' mental health and relational problems. Caregivers are required to listen to youth's adverse life experiences and respond with care, without being overwhelmed by their own emotional experiences. Also, the occurrence of disruptive incidents may trigger an interpersonal mode of threat-defense, requiring high emotion regulation skills in order to maintain the intervention focus. The emotional demands of this settings and fragilities in staff qualification might impact on caregivers' emotional response, and they may withdraw from caring and perceive the job as bringing more distress than satisfaction. This cost of caring may compromise the quality of care itself, impacting both on youth and on the organisational climate, including the stability to create a secure environment. Research suggested that affect management and self-caring behaviour should be promoted in order to preserve staff well-being and consistency in care. Nonetheless, evidence-based programs for the promotion of these competences are still scarce.

Compassion has been proposed as a foundation stone for good practices in helping settings. Functioning as a motivation to care, compassion predisposes the individual to be attuned and emotionally moved by one's own or someone else's suffering, as well as to engage in actions to give support. Compassion can be learned and trained in order to regulate affect and to flourish. Particularly, self-compassion has been associated with enhanced resilience and linked to greater life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and social connectedness. Compassion-based interventions have been found to be effective in several helping settings; yet, its application and research in RYC is absent.

With the purpose of cultivating a compassionate self and promoting an affiliative climate in RYC, a 12-session group program for caregivers was developed: Compassionate Mind Training (CMT-Care Homes). To evaluate the CMT-Care Homes efficacy, a cluster randomised trial was conducted with 6 Portuguese Residential Care Homes (RCH), which were randomly assigned to intervention or control conditions. Sample included 63 caregivers, aged between 25 and 62 years old, working on a regular basis with adolescents in RCH, who were assessed at pre- and post-intervention (n = 32 intervention, n = 31 control). Outcome variables included: self-compassion, emotional climate, satisfaction with life and resilience. To investigate the preliminary results of CMT-Care Homes, a two-factor mixed multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed. Multivariate tests showed a significant Time×Group interaction effect with large effect size (Pillais' trace = .339, F = 4.022, p = .001, n2p = .339). Univariate tests indicated that after the training, caregivers who attended the program experienced a significant improvement on self-compassion, while controls decreased on this variable. Participants of CMT-Care Homes also increased their levels of resilience and satisfaction with life, while controls decreased in resilience and maintained the same levels of satisfaction with life. Regarding the organisational emotional climate, caregivers who attended the CMT-Care Homes felt fewer threatening emotions in the workplace and more secure and contentment emotions. Caregivers from the RCH which did not participate in the training reported that the RCH emotional climate remained almost unchanged.

Overall, this study showed benefits of the CMT-Care Homes program delivered in RYC. Findings offer preliminary evidence of the effectiveness of the program, suggesting that it was able to increase self-compassion in caregivers, and foster their resilience and satisfaction with life. Additionally, it contributed to promote an affiliative climate on RYC, creating a more secure and caring environment for those in care.

Ten years later: Care leavers' satisfaction with intimate relationships and parenthood

Dr. Tehila Refaeli (Ben-Gurion University), Prof. Rami Benbenishty (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Prof. Anat Zeira (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Background and purpose

Studies consistently indicate that young people ageing out of residential care (care leavers) struggle in multiple life domains more than their peers who were not in care. While many studies on care leavers focus on tangible outcomes such as integration into higher education and the job market, relatively fewer studies examine care leavers' intimate relationships and parenthood. Such relationships could serve as a corrective experience to their own childhood adversities. Alternatively, these experiences may remind care leavers of adverse childhood circumstances and therefore pose a significant challenge to changing inter-generational patterns. Satisfaction with intimate relationships and parenthood may reflect their background, socio-economic situation, personal resources, and the formal and informal support they have received.

This presentation is based on a longitudinal study that followed Israeli care leavers for ten years after leaving care. We present a model predicting satisfaction with intimate relationships and parenthood based on their background characteristics, personal resources and formal and informal support at several points in time.

Method

There were four waves of data collection. The sample included 276 adolescents during their last year in care (T1), 234 one year later (T2), 220 three years later (T3) and 152 ten years after leaving care (T4). Satisfaction with intimate relationships and parenthood was measured at T4; personal characteristics were measured at T1 and T4; informal support, namely support from parents and friends, was measured in all waves; and experiences of traumatic life events, economic difficulties and use of formal support were measured at T4. Two hierarchical regressions were conducted to examine the contribution of background and care variables, personal characteristics, formal and informal support to predict satisfaction with intimate relationships and with parenthood at T4.

Results

Towards the end of their 20's, about three quarters (74.3%) were either married or had stable intimate relationships and more than one third (40.1%) were parents. Altogether, the independent variables accounted for 31.4% of the variance in satisfaction with intimate relationships and 55.3% of the variance in satisfaction with parenthood.

Satisfaction with intimate relationships was predicted by higher income, by fewer traumatic life events and by higher self-esteem at T4. Father's support ten years after leaving care predicted a higher level of satisfaction with current intimate relationships.

Satisfaction with parenthood was not related to personal and social factors from earlier years (with the exception of substance abuse at T2, which had a negative relationship with parenthood satisfaction). Rather, it was predicted by lower levels of traumatic events throughout the care leavers' lives and lower levels of mental distress and substance abuse ten years after leaving care. Additionally, higher levels of satisfaction with intimate relationships predicted higher levels of parental satisfaction (r=.45).

Conclusions and implications

The findings suggest that past traumatic life events greatly contribute to understanding young people's satisfaction with both intimate relationships and parenthood, indicating that ten years after leaving care, care leavers' backgrounds still affect their outcomes as adults. Risk factors such as substance abuse and mental distress are especially relevant to the care leavers' satisfaction as parents. Additionally, current satisfaction with intimate relationships (T4) contributes to parenthood satisfaction. From a practice point of view, it is important to examine why formal supports were not associated with satisfaction from intimate relationships and parenthood. It may be necessary to develop supports for care leavers that target these important areas of life.

Testimonies of Adolescents in Residential Care about their lives during times of COVID-19

Prof. Luiza Nobre-Lima (Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive-behavioral Interventions, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra), Ms. Bárbara Esculcas (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences University of Coimbra)

One year after its declaration by the World Health Organization, the pandemic of Covid-19 still endures with a wide variety of consequences for people all over the world. Infected or not with the coronavirus, everybody has been obliged to confinement and other restrictions. Children and adolescents are no exception. Scientific research meanwhile conducted has been showing that they are experiencing psychological distress like worry, helplessness, and fear. At home, children suffer with limited social connection, reduced physical activity, loneliness, and boredom. Adolescents report anxiety and depression. School closure, absence or decline in physical activity, an increase in screen time are identified as consequences of the pandemic that can have a negative impact on the psychological functioning and well-being of children and adolescents. For those living in residential care the consequences stemming from the pandemic and confinement can be more severe. The goal of the present research is to conduct a qualitative study based on interviews with adolescents in residential care to explore with them the way they are perceiving and living the actual situation of pandemic and the impact it is having on their daily lives considering their routines and relationships in and out the Residential Homes, their schoolwork, and their contact with families. Data is still being collected and will end before may 2021.

Testing Tuning in to Teens (TINT) with adoptive parents and guardians in the U.S.: The replication phase of intervention research

Dr. Nancy Rolock (Case Western Reserve University), Dr. Kerrie Ocasio (West Chester University of Pennsylvania), Dr. Kevin White (East Carolina University), Dr. Rowena Fong (The University of Texas at Austin)

Objectives: Ensuring the wellbeing and stability of children with foster care experiences is critical. In the US, between 5% and 20% of children experience a reentry into foster care after adoption or guardianship; adolescents are at increased risk for foster care reentry. Few interventions have been rigorously tested that aim to reduce foster care reentry. TINT is a six-week parent education program that teaches caregivers skills in responding with empathy, support and guidance when young people experience emotions while helping them to reduce their emotionally dismissive or harsh parenting responses. Previous experimental research with a generalist population in Australia demonstrated a reduction in emotion dismissing behavior by parents who received TINT and related reductions in youth internalizing and externalizing behavior. The current study sought to replicate these findings with an adoptive/guardianship population identified as at-risk for a return to foster care. Adaptations were made to the intervention to use with an adoption/guardianship population, resulting in one additional session added to the six-session format. Groups were facilitated by: (1) an experienced clinician and (2) agency adoption/guardianship staff, with regular coaching of the facilitators by the purveyor of the program.

Methods: A post randomized consent trial was used, with 1,212 families in the target population (769 intervention, 443 comparison). Adoptive parents and guardians were included in the study if permanence occurred for their child after age 5 or the child had been in congregate care, and the child was currently between the ages of 10-13. The program successfully made contact with 477 (62%) of intervention cases, and 94 (12%) participated. Twenty-two groups (154 sessions) were run, organized in 7 cohorts. A short questionnaire (10 questions) was distributed to all intervention and control cases after the fourth cohort, as it was determined that just 12% of eligible families were participating in the intervention, to assess differences that might emerge between groups in the study. Outcomes included warmth in the child-caregiver relationship and caregiver struggling to manage the child's behavior, confidence in meeting the child's needs, and thoughts about ending the adoption/guardianship. Forty-three percent (n=244) responded to the questionnaire.

Results: The first set of analyses explored differences between those who were offered TINT versus those in the comparison group. An intent-to-treat analysis and a treatment-on the-treatment analysis found no statistically significant differences between the groups on outcomes. However, exploratory analyses indicated that null effects may be because those assigned to the intervention group who participated in TINT differed from those assigned to the intervention group who did not participate in TINT. Participants noted more struggles to manage their child's behavior (t=-2.24, df=169, p<.05), and were less confident that they could meet the child's needs (t=2.75, df=172, p<.01). To account for baseline differences, a linear mixed effects model was estimated. Results indicated a statistically significant intervention effect of TINT on struggling to manage the child's behavior (interaction of the TINT with time); z = -1.74, p = .041. The treatment group had an additional decrease over time on the outcome variable compared to the comparison group ($\chi 2(3) = 35.25$, p < .001).

Conclusions: Consistent with previous studies on the experiences of adoptive and guardianship families, this study provides evidence that most families are adjusting well. However, those who were struggling to manage children's behavior, less confident in their parenting, struggling to respond to their children appropriately seemed receptive to TINT, suggesting that these families may welcome a multi-session parent training after adoption or guardianship.

The subjective well-being of young people in out-of-home care in Spain

Prof. Carla González-García (University of Cantabria), Ms. Federica Gullo (University of Oviedo), Ms. Laura García-Alba (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo)

Introduction: Young people who live in out-of-home care (OOHC) have experienced very unfavorable circumstances in their family environments with many psychosocial problems such as adverse economic situations, mental health problems, drug abuse and gender violence. In this regard, research has evidenced that young people in OOHC make up a population at high risk of suffering from a mental health problems, risky behaviors and lower levels of subjective well-being (SWB). Although there are many lines of research on this topic, the studies which have focused on SWB in this group are few. These have indicated that young people in care show lower levels of SWB than the general population and especially girls in some domains (Llosada-Gistau et al 2017). The study of SWB provides a good basis to collect the perceptions of young people about their main life domains and levels of satisfaction, so more research in this field enables us to better understand them and promote interventions with the right approach, which gives priority to young people´s perceptions/voices. **Objective:**The main aim of this study is to analyze the SWB of a sample in OOHC in Spain. It will analyse the differences found in SWB, paying particular attention to the influence of age and gender in well-being levels. **Method**: The total sample was composed of 622 young people aged between 15 and 22. We worked with three different samples: young people in residential care homes (*N*=239; *M*=15,5), which corresponds to the age of 15-17, young people in preparation for transition to adulthood (N=159; 16,42) and a group of care leavers aged 18-26 (*N*= 224; *M*=19,23). In order to examine changes in SWB according to age, all analysis were performed considering this variable. To assess SWB, we used the Spanish version published by Casas (Casas et al., 2013) of the Personal Well-Being Index (Cummins et al., 2003). The PWI is a multi-item domain-based scale which included seven items on satisfaction with different life domains (your health; how safe you feel; the opportunities you have in life; the things you have; your relationships in general; and how you use your time), to which we added four items associated with relevant life aspects to young people in care (your family; your future; your body and your residential facility) and a single item commonly used in this kind of studies (with your whole life globally). **Results:**Preliminary results showed lower levels of well-being in people in residential care compared to general population according to results found in previous studies with general population, being the lowest scores attributed to the perception of future in all the sample. We found differences between groups in the following domains: life achievements, your safety, groups you belong to and life as whole. Care leavers group scored higher in these domains in comparison with the rest of groups, but especially these differences were found between preparation to adulthood group and care leavers. In terms of gender differences, girls presented lower scores than boys in almost all areas. **Conclusions**: The main implication that we can draw from this study the need to incorporate a gender perspective in research and practice given their specific features. It is also crucial to increase efforts to promote public policies concerning the well-being of young people in care, especially care leavers. Recognition of young people's own perceptions is essential to implement programs that meet their need

The Added Value of Prioritising Children's and Young People's Perspectives in Research (Chair Dr Nikki Luke) - The Perspectives of Children in Need and Children in Care on Educational Progress and Experiences

Dr. Eleanor Staples (University of Bristol)

Objectives

This presentation is based on findings from a recently completed major study in England led jointly by Professor David Berridge (University of Bristol) and Dr Nikki Luke (Rees Centre, University of Oxford). The objectives of the research were: to explore the educational trajectories, attainments and progress of Children in Need (CIN) and Children in Care (CIC) in England; what factors are associated with children's educational attainment in public examinations aged 16 years; how can we account for children who succeed educationally at 16 years despite severe early disadvantage; and, the focus of this presentation, what are children's as well as parents' and professionals' perspectives on the overall factors affecting children's educational progress. Children in Need in England are those receiving services from social workers due to serious concerns over their health or development but remain living with parents or relatives.

Methods

This was a mixed methods, multidisciplinary study. We will briefly outline the *quantitative* element of the research (prospective, longitudinal analysis of education and social work data relating to 471,688 children born in 2000/01). This presentation will focus on the *qualitative* phase, involving interviews with 18 Children in Need and 23 Children in Care, as well as 17 parents/relatives, 19 social workers and 23 teachers, and 7 joint-interviews with Virtual School Heads and senior social work managers. This enables us to contrast children and adult views, which will be discussed in the presentation. These participants were selected from a cross-section of 6 local authorities in England. Interviews included primary- and secondary-aged pupils between 6-17 years, as well as those considered to be making 'good progress' educationally or 'poorer progress' in order to explore differences. Interviews were recorded, if participants gave permission, fully transcribed and analysed using NVivo qualitative software.

Results

The accounts of CIN revealed that lack of resources was important in limiting their educational progress. It was difficult for families to afford school uniforms, computers and internet access and other items, and to provide a quiet place to study. This was in contrast to CIC living with foster/residential carers. Four main reasons were given by CIN and CIC to explain the differences between those making good educational progress and those who were not. First, the experience of continuity and stability in home life and schooling, which helped children to overcome previous harmful experiences. Secondly, was children's social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMHD) and the extent to which these were being addressed. A third explanation was school strategies and responses to deal with children's difficulties: children said that some teachers were helpful and supportive but others were less so. Finally, children making poorer educational progress experienced more problems with their peer relations, influenced by their SEMHD.

Conclusions

Findings from the mixed methods were combined into four overriding themes. First, *instability in children's care and education*, which jeopardised children's progress and attainments. Secondly, there was *the nature of secondary schooling in England and educational policy for vulnerable learners*. Some schools adopted a narrow focus on academic excellence and disciplinary codes. These were followed by two more general themes, including *the importance of effective early intervention.* Multiple periods of intervention were common and a significant minority were still receiving services at age 16. Finally, there was *greater attention required to Children in Need*. CIN are the majority group and experience considerable educational difficulties as do CIC, yet there are few policy measures in place to support CIN educationally.

Exploring children's perspectives in this study was valuable as it provided rich information on the experiences underlying the national statistics and also highlighted important issues absent from national databases.

The added value of prioritising children’s and young people’s perspectives in research ¬– From research into practice: Sharing the perspectives of children in care on educational experiences

Dr. Nikki Luke (Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

Objectives

This presentation focuses on how the findings from a recent mixed-methods study, led jointly by Professor David Berridge (University of Bristol) and Dr Nikki Luke (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), were used to create a resource for children and young people in care. The broader research project explored the educational attainments and progress of Children in Need and Children in Care in England, and sought to identify factors associated with attainment at age 16. The study built on earlier work (Sebba et al., 2015) which also used mixed-methods. In a subsequent conversation with a care leaver about the interview findings from Sebba et al. (2015), we were told “I wish I had known there were other people who felt like I did.” Prompted by this, our design for the more recent study included a commitment to produce a free-to-access resource for children in care, which would present quotes from our interviews with children in care alongside topics for discussion, in order to encourage children to talk with their carers, social workers and teachers about their educational experiences.

Method

We worked with two care-experienced researchers to produce a short booklet specifically designed for children in care. The researchers read through the transcripts of 23 interviews with children in care to select the quotes that stood out for them, without imposing any *a priori* themes. We discussed what themes the quotes represented, and how they might be organised and presented for children. The resulting themes were then used as prompts for discussion questions to include in the resource.

Results

A short, colourful resource for children was produced and made available to children in care in England as a free-to-access PDF. The resource covered a small number of themes relating to children’s educational experiences and the factors linked to attainment, which had been co-produced with our care-experienced researchers. Each theme was accompanied by several suggestions that a child in care could use to prompt discussion with their carer, social worker or school teacher about their own educational experiences.

Conclusions

The process of producing this resource revealed the value of involving care-experienced researchers when transferring research knowledge into practice. Our researchers’ unique perspectives meant they were able to identify themes and specific interview quotes that might not have been obvious to researchers without this care experience. The result is a resource for children in care which we hope can help reduce the sense of stigma and loneliness that many children feel, by reflecting their own perspective; as well as offering the prompts needed to further a discussion with key adults on how to support their educational experiences. We will be monitoring the use of the resource through our conversations with Virtual School Headteachers and social work managers.

THE CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH LEAVING FOSTER CARE SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Sandile Dhludhlu (University of South Africa)

In South Africa, foster care placement still remain the main choice for alternative care for children who have been found to be in need of care and protection. There are three different types of foster care placements in South Africa, namely; kinship foster care, cluster foster care and residential foster care. Foster care seeks to ensure that children are cared for, protected and nurtured in a safe and healthy environment.

Children placed in foster care are viewed as legally adults at the age of 18 and, therefore, presumed capable of caring for themselves. In the study conducted for my Doctoral studies, it was found that these children or youth face a prospect of losing most of the economic support after they have been discharged from the provisions of the Children‘s Act 38 of 2005. In South Africa, the South African Social Service Agency (SASSA) administers the social security. SASSA terminates the foster child grant of foster children when they complete Grade 12 and have reached the age of 18 or do not further their education. This takes place regardless of whether the child is employed or unemployed. As a results this makes foster care services without a socio-economic developmental focus and unsustainable as the termination of the foster child grant plunges young adults and families back into the cycle of dire poverty and threatens a sustainable livelihood for the family.

The main goal of the study, was to explore the challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care system in South Africa. The research objectives for this study are as follows:

- To examine the experiences of leaving care or transitioning out of foster care system.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities of leaving foster care system.
- To explore the experiences of the youth who have already transitioned out of foster care system.
- To examine social support mechanisms available to youth leaving care.
- To identify barriers to successful transitioning out of foster care system.
- To examine resilience of youth transitioning out of the foster care system.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted the qualitative approach, to deepen his understanding of the challenges and experiences of youth leaving care from their point of view. A total of 18 social workers and 18 youth leaving care in the Gauteng Province (Tshwane District Municipality) were selected for the study. This total number included social workers and youths from the Department of Social Development and various Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCC). However, for the purpose of my presentation, I will be focusing on the findings from eight social workers and eight youths from the CYCCs. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews.

The findings indicated that foster care placement offer various opportunities which includes provision of basic needs, therapy or counselling services, provision of family environment and shelter, educational opportunities, poverty alleviation, and promotion of independence. There were also challenges and barriers in rendering foster care services as identified by the social workers, which included lack of cooperation from foster children, parents or caregivers, lack of resources, delay of payments of stipends from the Department of Social Development, burnout and shortage of social workers in the CYCCs, and expensive psychological services. The youths indicated the following challenges; unemployment and lack of housing post foster care, change of foster care homes, lack of support from social workers and no re-unification services, teenage pregnancy and school dropouts, sexual abuse and prostitution. The study concluded that youth leaving the foster care system should be thoroughly prepared to leave the foster care system in order to become independent young adults.

The child as a ‘crown witness’ - perceptions and constructions from professionals regarding children in child protection

Mrs. Judith Haase (Catholic University of Applied Sciences NRW, Dept. Münster)

Objectives

The study deals with the question to which manner children in child protection have been socially constructed by professionals over the last three decades. The obtained data originates from a german institution, which works on an outpatient basis. The institution aims to bridge child and youth welfare with the healthcare sector. The agency consists of different practitioners like physicians, socials workers or psychologists. One aim of the research is to outline certain construction logics and patterns used by those professionals. Another aim is to reconstruct what position and what voice children are given by the professionals.

Method

Within the methodological framework of the grounded theory approach, I mixed quantitative and qualitative, non-reactive, methods for a retrospective data access. I followed 4811 case records from 1985 to 2014. Firstly, descriptive statistics of all records were used in order to provide summaries about different features. Secondly two cases got reconstructed in order to check quality and validity of the records and to acquire first hypotheses. Finally, qualitative analyses of 26 single case records were conducted in different steps of coding and refinement. The analysis steps were not developed in advance but were designed from the respective results.

Results

The descriptive-statistical analysis illustrates trends and patterns over the three decades and shows that child protection is subject to social, political and cultural changes. The results depict professional discourses over time as well as public development, social policy matters and publicly discussed incidents in Germany. That leads to the conclusion that the child in child protection is a social construction, which is made dependent of these connotations. The child appears as an object of contemporary perceptions, valuations and ideas. The findings of the qualitative analyses indicate that the key task of the professionals is to get the child to speak. To achieve the information they need, the diagnosticians apply different strategies to encourage and enable the child to declare troubles, neglect or abuse. Those methods vary from respecting the child’s well-being on the one hand to pressure and corner it on the other hand. During the process, the practitioners characterize the child’s skills and willingness to provide the required and claimed information between being compliant on the one hand or non-compliant on the other.

Conclusions

The statistical analyses lead to the conclusion, that the child appears as an object of contemporary perceptions, valuations and ideas. The qualitative analyses show that the child is attributed as a witness or an investigation item which has to get cracked. The applied strategies and attributions clarify that the construction and reconstruction of generational differences as well as power imbalances of professional relationships appear to be constitutive elements of the process. The child’s needs and wishes are subordinated to the goal of data inquiry. Instead of giving the child a voice, it should be made to speak.

The child’s perspective: Reconceptualization of family by children living in SOS CV Estonia

Ms. Ingrid Sindi (Tallinn University), Dr. Judit Strömpl (Tartu University), Prof. Karmen Toros (Tallinn University)

Background and purpose: In Estonia, among substitute care services, including in SOS CV, the concept of family is highly emphasised. However, children‘s perspectives of ‘family‘ is not visible. Children as social actors with their lived experience participate in reproduction of social life and therefore it is important to analyse carefully the children’s perspective. In the current presentation we focus on two research questions: (1) How children construct the meaning of family in SOS CV? (2) What kind of details are important for children when they talk about family?

Methods: Ethnographic field research was carried out in an Estonian SOS CV in 2014-2015. Data consists participant observation notes, repeated individual and group conversations with children (n=8) and notes of informal conversations with children during different joint activities (e.g., cooking, hiking trip).

Findings: The findings indicate the ‘family‘ is the central topic in the children’s stories, related with their past and present. The present reality for children is living in SOS family. From past, the biological family appears from their stories as abstract notion, full of negative and positive emotions, influenced by what and how they remember past events and persons. Children spoke about how years later they understand their removal from their families, realizing various benefits of living in substitute home, such as good living conditions, their own room, safety and support by SOS parents and other adults. Additionally, children spoke that ‘families can be different‘, which suggests that more research is needed to find out what they mean by that. However, due to the transient nature of SOS family and complex issues regarding biological family, the sense-making of family and family relations is not easy. Children pointed to formality and contradictions in relations in SOS family, which is mostly related to artificial terms and concepts (e.g. mother, father, aunt), but also permanent relations and temporary life in SOS family. This creates misunderstandings and do not correspond to the real family concept related to details such as place of birth, family-ties, family stories, continuity. However, the biological family, not complying to the real-family concept is inaccessible, distant and fading into the past.

Conclusion: First of all, the family means the continuity for children, which does not end with the childhood. Today, as adults in substitute home generally do not talk on topics related to the child’s past and family of origin, this limitation leaves gaps in the sense-making and conceptualization of the family. The family topic is a critical issue that should be further conceptualized in terms of child‘s coherent life story, continuity and from child‘s perspective.

The Child's Right to Express its Views; An Analysis of how the Child's Views are weighted in care orders

Mrs. Tina Gerdts-Andresen (Østfold University College), Mrs. Heidi Aarum Hansen (Østfold University College)

All individuals are protected by human rights, regardless of age, status, or other characteristics. Human rights are expressions of general values that are agreed upon internationally, and its core is respect for human dignity and the individual's personal integrity. In Norway, human rights are protected through international conventions and national law. By endorsing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and incorporating it in Norwegian law in 2003, Norway is considered one of the leading countries regarding safeguarding children's rights. Children's right to participation is central in recognizing children as independent individuals and is a prerequisite for safeguarding children's dignity and integrity.

This paper is based on a qualitative study. The data were derived from the public register Lovdata, which provides access to a collection of online legal resources, including anonymous decisions from the Country Social Welfare Board. The Child Welfare Act has undergone several revisions and content changes in recent years. The last revision is still ongoing, but with several changes implemented from 1stJuly 2018. Therefore, the selected search period was set from 1st July 2018 to 31st December 2019 to secure that the decisions included in this study are based on current Norwegian law. The initial search provided a total of 358 County Social Welfare Board decisions as potentially relevant decisions. All decisions were screened based on abstract and conclusion to identify which decisions concerned placing children in public care, cf. section 4-12 of the Child Welfare Act. This amounted to a total of 108 decisions involving 147 children from newborn to 16 years old.

This study aimed to describe and analyze how the County Social Welfare Board relates to the requirements of a child's right to express its views before a care order is issued and whether the child's views are given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity.

The analysis suggests that children, to a small extent, participate in the care order decisions, regardless of the child's age or maturity. Firstly, the documents show that children aged 0-6 are not given the opportunity to be heard. Secondly, the documents show that in cases where the child's opinion is coinciding with the parents', the Board consistently, almost regardless of the child's age or maturity, maintains that the child's opinion cannot be given (any) weight. Standard phrases refer to the child's lack of capability to understand the complexity or consequence of its statements. Thirdly, the documents show that in cases where the child's opinion coincides with the Child Welfare Service's assessment, the Board emphasizes the child's statements to a greater degree. Lastly, the documents show that the Board's weighing of the child's views is consistent, regardless of whether the care order is issued or not.

Conclusion: The child's involvement in care order cases appears to be tokenistic and does not, in fact, lead to the child being taken seriously in the decision-making process. The child's statement is emphasized only when the child's views are consistent with other information in the case. Moreover, based on the content of the care orders, it seems to be "reasonably available alternative decisions that could have been adopted" by the Board "to minimize the inconsistency between the care order and the child's views." This suggests that the Board's weighing of the child's voice contradicts the child's conventional rights.

The Continuing Care program: participatory and inclusive practice in transition from care support in an Australian context

Ms. Jade Purtell (Monash University), Dr. Philip Mendes (Monash i)

Objectives:

Transitions from care research is often concerned with ascertaining outcomes for care leavers and different pathways through the care system and beyond it. Despite decades of care experienced young people's advocacy for out-of-home care and leaving care systems reforms, little research has been carried out on how young people experience opportunities to provide their own perspectives on their care and care systems more broadly. The Salvation Army (former) Westcare Continuing Care program sought to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from care in metropolitan Melbourne, Australia, through service provision and advocacy to meet the planning, preparation and support needs of young people as they transition to independent living aged 15-25 years.

The program evaluation undertaken by Monash University researchers aimed to investigate the ways in which the program's services were delivered and how effective the service was in improving outcomes for young people transitioning from care. A key part of the program for young people participating in the evaluation was young people's own advocacy as part of The Youth Group Advocates (TYGA). This paper discusses key aspects of the Continuing Care program and activities undertaken by TYGA members to communicate young people's own recommendations for system reforms to various audiences.

Method:

Seven focus groups were held with program stakeholders including: program staff and young people participating in the program, as well as associated service providers from within the same organisation and those working from other organisations. All groups were asked about their impressions of the service and the support provided to young people.

Results:

Participants in the Continuing Care evaluation felt that exiting young people from out-of-home care at 18 years of age without ongoing supports and accommodation was not only likely to result in poor outcomes, but actually caused early disengagement from services and supports in the lead up to transitions from care for many young people. Young people spoke of the anxiety caused by 'leaving care' as having a deep impact on their wellbeing. The provision of a known and trusted central point for young people to contact if they needed any assistance was said to be important to them as it created a practical and felt safety net. Young people in the program participant focus groups were passionate about youth participation and the work they had undertaken as part of the Continuing Care program's The Youth Group Advocates (TYGA). Young people felt their input was necessary to youth services because 'nobody knows what we need better than we do'. Continuing Care program staff fully supported young people's rights to be active participants in program development activities and in presenting on the program and advocating for improved services for young people transitioning from care. Young people appreciated the opportunity to speak to people in positions of influence and authority about their experiences in care and to assist with the recruitment of staff who would work in the organisation.

Conclusion:

The provision of practical and emotional generalist support through Continuing Care appeared to alleviate significant distress for young people during their transitions from care improving their participation in education, employment and training, their connections to community and social networks, and their material resources. The youth participation group TYGA allowed program participants many opportunities to be meaningful contributors to the service itself and to the care system more generally.

The contribution of mentoring relationships to hope among youth in residential care in Israel

Dr. Yafit Sulimani-Aidan (Tel Aviv University), Dr. Eran Melkman (Univesrity of Oxford), Prof. Chan Hellman (Univesrity of Oklahoma)

Background: Hope has long been viewed as important to individuals attempting to overcome obstacles. Overall hope is the combination of one's appraisal of capability and determination to achieve goals (Agency) and identifying viable routes to reach them (Pathway) (Snyder 1994). Although hope is widely recognized as an empowering resource that helps individuals cope with uncertainty, loss, and major life challenges, it has scarcely been investigated among youth in care (Sulimani-Aidan, Sivan, & Davidson-Arad, 2017). The main goal of this study was to examine the incremental contribution of mentoring to hope among youth on the verge of leaving care above and beyond related personal characteristics and placement history.

Methods: The sample included 148 adolescents who had adult mentors (ages 16-19) from three main types of out-of-home placements in Israel that agreed to participate in the study voluntary: therapeutic residential care facilities, youth villages, and foster care families. The instruments tapped the young adult's personal background (e.g. gender, ethnicity, mothers' education and total placements), hope and mentoring (e.g., longevity, duration and function in relationship).

Results: Results showed that lower levels of parental education and being in a welfare residential placement were associated with decreased levels of hope. Mentoring length and various mentoring functions ('role model', 'parental figure', and 'independence promoter') were found to have a significant contribution to the prediction of hope above and beyond associated individual and placement variables.

Conclusions and implications: The findings indicate that mentoring relationships for youth in care play a significant role in the development of hope. Thus, residential care leaders should recruit and select mentors for longevity, and train mentors to serve as role models and parental figures who focus on independent living in order to influence hope among youth who are about to leave care. Discussion focuses on the importance of seeking strategies to strengthen youths' relationships with their meaningful adult figures or connect them with new potential mentors in order to support their successful transition into adulthood.

The contribution of mentoring to the life skills of youth leaving care in Israel

Dr. Yafit Sulimani-Aidan (Tel Aviv University), Dr. Eran Melkman (Univesrity of Oxford), Prof. Johanna Greeson (University of Pennsylvania)

Background: Earlier studies indicated that mentoring relationships operate through improving the youth's social and emotional development and by enhancing both cognitive development and positive identity development (Ahrens et al., 2016; Rhodes, 2005). These processes are very important during the transitional period from care to independence because they play a dominant role in the developmental tasks during emerging adulthood. Therefore, mentoring can serve as an important protective and promotive factor increasing these vulnerable youths' resilience as they make their challenging transition into adulthood (Arnett, 2001).During this period, all young people must use their acquired life skills in order to make significant decisions about housing, employment, career, and marriage (Arnett, 2000). However, due to the often-turbulent move from state care to independent living and the limited support resources available during the transition (Greeson, Garcia, Kim & Courtney, 2015), these skills are frequently required immediately upon leaving care. This study's goal was to examine the contribution of natural mentoring relationships to the life skills of youth on the verge of leaving care in the core areas of: education, employment, and avoidance of risk behaviors, while controlling for the youth's personal characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, parents education, and parents' family status) and placement history (the type of their current placement (foster care, welfare residential setting or educational residential setting) and the length of stay in their current placement).

Methods: The sample included 174 adolescents in residential care in Israel from three main types of out-of-home placements that agreed to participate in the study voluntary: therapeutic residential care facilities, youth villages, and foster care families. The instruments tapped the young adult's personal background (e.g. gender, ethnicity, mothers' education and total placements), life skills and mentoring (e.g., longevity, duration and function in relationship).

Results: Results showed the amongst the three life skill areas, adolescents' education skills were the lowest. Significant gender differences in avoidance of risk behaviors skills. Length of stay in the current facility was positively related to skills for avoidance of risk behaviors. Also, mentoring duration and mentoring functions including: mentor as 'role model', 'parental figure', and 'independence promoter' significantly contributed to the prediction of the three life skills above and beyond control variables.

Conclusions and implications: The present study emphasizes the importance of mentoring for the cultivation of concrete life skills of youth in care and highlights the array of meaningful roles mentors play in youth's development of life skills. Also, the study identifies important practice implications regarding the mechanism by which mentoring relationships contribute to the resilience of adolescents.

The decision making at the end of the intervention by the child protection day centres (SAJE): child, parents and social worker's perspectives

Dr. Anna Rurka (Université Paris Nanterre), Dr. Andrea Barros Leal (Université Paris Nanterre), Dr. Louis Mathiot (Université Paris Nanterre)

This paper comes from a study conducted during last two years (2017-2019) in Paris, funded by the National Observatory of Child Protection and four professional associations. On the base of the Decision Making Ecology Model (DME) (Baumann, Dalgleish, Fluke & Kern, 2011). The research results regards the participation of the child and the family in child protection aimed to :

- Identify the decision-making process, factors and contexts impacting the decisions taken, as well their effectiveness.
- Analyze the participation of children and parents in the intervention and decision-making process, the way in which their opinions, views, contributions, aspirations are taken into account by the services.

This qualitative research focused on 23 children and 22 families. The average duration of analysed interventions is twenty-one months. In the beginning of the research, the children concerned were between 8 and 12 years old. The majority of children was oriented by the schools to the SAJE, because of the learning and behavioral problems.

The qualitative methodology is based on the semi-structured interviews with children, parents, professionals and on the analysis of the written assessments transmitted by SAJE to the Child Protection Agency. Two waves of interviews were conducted with children and their parents. The first took place at the last stage of the intervention led by the SAJE (fr. *Service d'accueil de jour éducatif*) (officially limited to 18 moths), the second 6 - 8 months later. The researchers carried out 66 semi-structured interviews: 31 interviews with parents, 13 interviews with children (including 4 parent-child interviews). The researchers also carried out 12 interviews with the social workers in charge of the case, the professionals in charge of schooling within SAJE, 5 interviews with the social work team coordinators, 3 collective interviews with school social workers, 2 with managers within the child agency and one with the judge.

The research identified three constant patterns of the decision-making processes at the end of the intervention led by SAJE: 1) There is no disagreement, decision-making is based on the consensual progressive decision-making in the SAJE and with the partners and families. 2) Agreements and disagreements between the institutional partners are observed and each of them take decision in its own area of expertise. The SAJE must sometimes resist to the concerns expressed by other institutional partners. 3) The proposed orientation made by SAJE is challenged by the lack of consensus between the partners. None of them don't give itself the legitimacy to surpass the other's opinion. In addition, there is the inability of the system to offer an adequate solution to the needs of the child.

Regarding the involvement of children, all of them feels taken into consideration and participate fully in the socio-educational program. These services have the specificity of being child-oriented what is fully recognized by the children themselves at 12 months of intervention. However, the child's perspective and its opinions are rarely brought to the attention of the final decision makers within the child protection agency, through the written reports. The parent's point of view is notified in all analysed reports. The parents know well what they can expect from the child protection services and from the school.

This paper proposes to discuss these results, with some additional ethical aspects and limits of the research.

BAUMANN, D. J., DALGLEISH, L., FLUKE, J., & KERN, H. (2011). The decision-making ecology. Washington, DC: American Humane Association.

The decision-making process in permanency planning: a collective negotiation

Dr. Rosita Vargas Diaz (Université de Montréal), Prof. Poirier Marie-Andree (Université de Montréal), Dr. Chantal Lavergne (Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté, CIUSSS Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de Montréal)

Research on child protection decision-making has focused mainly on the study of individual decisions and the factors that determine them, in a predominantly deductive approach, aimed mainly at controlling human error. However, the decision-making process in child protection is rarely individual and is strongly linked to the context. Indeed, many researchers agree that complex decisions (such as those of the choice of a permanent environment) tend to be made collectively. In addition, several authors agree on its pragmatic nature and on the importance of taking into account the organizational context in which this process develops.

This presentation aims to present the results of a doctoral research which focuses on the decision-making processes in permanency care planning. Through an ethnomethodological study consisting of 9 months of observation and 16 interviews with key stakeholders, this research intends to be a contribution to the knowledge of this process.

The findings highlight that there are a clear collective and contextual nature of this practice, where several stakeholders from different teams with specific mandates and purposes come together to work on a permanency life project for the child. These actors must negotiate and balance different logics of action that structure their daily practice: clinical, legal and organizational logic. Each one of them has different aims and frames for action. Among these frameworks, the law, the interests of the child, risk and jurisprudence acquire their own color in the context of permanency planning. This is a complex process that is constructed in the duality between the agentivity of the actors and the constraints of the system.

The development and description of an adolescents' risk-behaviour management (ARBM) programme for foster parents

Dr. Hanelie Malan (School for Psychosocial Health, North-West University), Dr. Fatima Mmusi (North-West University), Prof. Alida Herbst (North-)

Abstract
Foster care is globally viewed as the most suitable option for children who are in need of alternative care with an assumption that it will provide them with stability and create opportunities whereby proper care and nurture will help them find a sense of belonging.

The increase in the number of children who are abandoned, neglected and orphaned due to poverty and the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa, has changed the state of foster care drastically. In 2018 a number of 446, 475 children were in legal foster care placement, as a result, child care settings and foster care systems function under enormous pressure. In recent South African studies, findings show a lack of adequate social services, limited family support, and limited or a lack of knowledge and skills in caring for these emotional and psychologically wounded adolescents, are some of the main setbacks faced by the current foster care system. The emotional and psychological protection needs of these children are neglected, which leads to an increase in risk-behaviour amongst adolescents in foster care. Risk behaviour has been identified more so during adolescent stage as one of the contributing factors to foster care placement disruptions and breakdowns. According to literature, most parents find it difficult to cope with fostered adolescents' complex emotions, which contribute to the presence of risk-behaviour. The aim this study was to develop a programme for foster parents is to empower them through enhancing parenting skills and knowledge to enable them to develop positive coping mechanisms in dealing with adolescents presenting with risk-behaviour.

Research question:What should be the content, structure and process of adolescents' risk behaviour programme for parents fostering adolescents presenting with risk-behaviours?

Method:The researchers developed an *Adolescents' Risk-Behaviour Management (ARBM)* programme for foster parents and evaluated it using a mixed-method approach. This study utilized an integration of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches against the explanatory sequential design in collecting, comparing and analysing data. Participants of the study were recruited from designated welfare organisations within the North-West Province, in South Africa. The sample included parents fostering adolescents between the ages of 14-17 years old.

First foster parents' attitudes and responses towards adolescents' risk-behaviour were explored. Data was quantitatively collected using the parenting style and dimension questionnaire (PSDQ). Secondly, semi-structured interviews were done to ascertain foster parents' views on what their psycho-social needs are in caring for adolescents presenting with risk behaviour. The researchers developed The ARBM programme, using data as well as a literature review, to enhance foster parents' knowledge, attitude and practices in relation to caring for adolescents presenting with risk behaviour. The programme was evaluated by the recipients who received training in the newly developed ARBM programme.

Results: The findings found an added value to the existing knowledge and make a significant contribution to interventions designed to assist parents fostering adolescents specifically where risk behaviour is evident. Findings further suggest that, equipping parents with a range of parenting skills and practices have the potential to empower and prepare them to respond positively to risk-behaviours presented by adolescents in their care. This, in turn, has the potential to improve the well-being of both adolescents and foster parents.

Conclusion: Findings of this study highlight a need to understand psychosocial factors surrounding the fos-

ter care environment and complexities it is faced with in contemporary society. There is a need to develop evidence-based interventions that are context specific, responsive and effective in an attempt to address difficulties associated with risk- behaviour in foster care.

The effect of placement instability on the transition to adulthood

Prof. Martin Goyette (Full Professor Canada Research Chair in Evaluating Public Actions Related to Young People and Vulnerable Populations National public school of Administration, Montreal, QC, Canada), Dr. Alexandre Blanchet (Ph. D, National public school of Administration, Montreal, QC, Canada), Dr. Tonino Esposito (Université de Montréal)

Each year approximately 65,000 children are removed from their families to be placed in foster care in Canada, and 12,000 young people are placed in Quebec. Many of them face an abrupt disruption of services at age 18, and experience major difficulties and much housing instability.

In a context where Western societies are all prolonging youth and deferring the transition to adulthood, the Study on the Future of Placed Youth (EDJeP) was developed in order to fill a gap in knowledge of the living conditions and the track to independence of youth ages 17 to 21 who were in placed in out-of-home care.

EDJeP is the first longitudinal representative large-scale Québec study on youth transition and was designed to allow national and international comparative analyses with two other important studies: the *Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development* and the *Étude longitudinale sur l'autonomisation des jeunes après un placement*(ELAP) in France. This project is built on a strong partnership which brings together researchers involved in youth protection in Quebec.

This presentation draws on the data gathered in the second wave of EDJeP in order to investigate the links between housing instability and homelessness experiences in greater details.

Method

Of a target population of 2,573 Québec youth, a sample of 1,136 young people in out-of-home care were met in the first wave of interviews based on a survey that covers these young people's situations and experiences in various areas of life. These youth, who were 17 years old at the time of the first wave, were met again in 2019 (836 youth have been interviewed), and will be met again in 2020 to monitor their progress toward autonomy. The data from these questionnaires will be combined with data obtained in the youth integration project (PIJ) and intermediate and family resources information system involving 2573 respondents, who met the eligibility criteria for the study. The administrative files of youth in youth protection were consulted in order to collect specific information about the service and care trajectories.

Results

Many youth in care experience instability:20% of youth who age out of care experience one or more homelessness episodes. On average, the 2,573 youth in our study population experienced 5.25 placements, excluding placements of under 72 hours. 14.3% of youth changed placements 10 times or more, with a maximum of 49 moves.

Placement instability has a very strong impact on the lives of youth: Youth who had an unstable track are twice as likely to be neither studying nor working, and those enrolled in school have a lower probability of simultaneously acquiring work experience.

Placement instability creates a vicious circle that limits young people's future: Youth who experienced more instability have a much lower tendency of being on track to obtain their Secondary V diploma before reaching adulthood, and they are more likely to be living in a rehabilitation centre. These are generally in a worse situation than the others when it comes to preparation for independent living.

Conclusions

Even if more than half of the respondents report stable housing situations, these youth are nonetheless in more vulnerable situations than youth in general in terms of education, social support and personal difficulties. One of the situations that provides the most protection against homelessness is when youth remain in foster families after ageing out of care.

The study findings underscore the importance of assisting the most vulnerable youth as they prepare to leave care, along with supporting their transition to autonomy, to prevent the emergence of homelessness among youth at risk of transitioning to visible homelessness, and youth who are in visible homelessness situations.

The effectiveness of KINGS; an intervention program for families with complex trauma

Dr. Anne-Marie Huyghen (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Orthopedagogiek)

*Introduction.*Complex trauma is caused by repetitive long-term exposure to traumatic events, such as domestic violence, physical or sexual abuse or neglect (Coppens & Kregten, 2018). In order to prevent long-term adverse effects, children with trauma need treatment. This applies in particular to children with complex trauma, for whom adverse effects are more serious and can cause permanent damage. Complex trauma is frequently associated with intergenerational trauma. Parents who have been traumatized themselves may not be emotionally available to their child, or may be less available for their child. Three common consequences for children whose parents, mothers in particular, suffer from complex trauma are attachment issues, internalising and externalising problems, and exposure to complex trauma (Metus, 2019).Treatment that focuses on the reduction of trauma symptoms in both child and parents is therefore essential. 'Kind IN Gezond Systeem' (KINGS) is a clinical treatment program that focuses on the one hand on the reduction of trauma symptoms in children and parents and on the other hand on the improvement of parent-child interactions and pedagogical skills of parents (Wanders & Van der Ploeg, 2017). Three treatment methods have been integrated in the KINGS program, namely Home Treatment with Support for Video Analysis (TOV), Motivation, Adaptive Skills and Trauma Resolution protocol (MASTR protocol) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). This study examines the effectiveness of KINGS for change in trauma symptoms, behavioral problems and parental stress.

*Methods.*A pretest-posttest study was performed on 22 families receiving KINGS. The Dutch version of the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom (PTSD) Scale was used to measure trauma complaints in adults, and the Children's Revised Impact of Event Scale (CRIES-13) for children. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was applied to measure emotional symptoms, behavioral problems and hyperactivity attention deficit in children. The "Opvoedingsbelasting Vragenlijst" (OBVL) was used to measure parental stress. These questionnaires were administered prior to the KINGS program and immediately afterwards. The differences between pre- and post-measurement were compared at group level (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test) and individual level (RCI and clinical significance).

Results. KINGS shows a large reduction in trauma symptoms between pre-measurement and post-measurement. In both children and their parents, a significant decrease ($p < .0125$) and major effects ($r < -0.5$) were measured at group level for the total PTSD score and for all individual PTSD clusters (re-experiencing, avoidance and hyperarousal). At the individual level, the highest recovery was found for symptoms of avoidance in both children and parents (Kroneman, 2019). Emotional symptoms, behavioral problems and hyperactivity attention deficit also decreased between pre- and post-measurement of KINGS,

with greater effects for younger children ($p < .0125; r < -0.5$). The total score of parenting stress, as well as the subscales decreased significantly at group level (p<0.5). At an individual level, the RCI measurements show a significant decrease of the total parenting stress for most parents.

Conclusions. KINGS is a family oriented intervention for families with complex trauma. It aims on breaking with the intergenerational character of complex trauma in these families. KINGS seems to be effective in reducing trauma symptoms, behavioural problems and parental stress. More research is however necessary to enhance the reliability of this study.

The evolution of emotional and behavioural problems of children in residential care in Spain: A longitudinal study

Prof. Carla González-García (University of Oviedo), Prof. Elli Vassiliadis (University of Palermo), Prof. Juan Manuel Moreno-Manso (Universidad de Extremadura), Dr. María Vicenta Alcántara López (Universidad de Murcia), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo)

INTRODUCTION: Numerous studies have evidenced that children in out-of-home care (OOHC) show a higher prevalence of mental health disorders (ranging from 40% to 88%) (Bronsard et al.,2011; Ford, Vostanis, Meltzer, & Goodman, 2007; Schmid, Goldbeck, Nuetzel, & Fegert, 2008) than children in general population and vulnerable children living at home (Barth & Lloyd 2010; Ford et al., 2007; Sempik, Ward, & Darker, 2008). However, there has been less research focused on the evolution of emotional and behavioral problems during their stay in OOHC (Havnen, Breivik & Jacobsen, 2014). A recent meta-analysis developed by Goemans, van Geel, & Vedder (2015) involving various studies to score internalizing, externalizing and total problems concluded the existence of considerable heterogeneity in the trajectories. As Tarrew-Sweeney (2017) has pointed out, children's mental health follows several distinct trajectories. This author affirms that research should focus on identifying the interpersonal characteristics of care which promote positive evolution. **OBJECTIVE:**This study aims to examine the evolution of mental health problems in a sample in residential care in Spain. **METHOD:** The sample was made up of 493 children between 8-17 years old (*M*=13.96, *DT*=2.46) in residential care in the regions of Asturias, Cantabria, Extremadura, Murcia, Guipúzcoa, Tenerife and seven SOS Children's Villages located in various parts of Spain. The information was collected in 2013 (T1), and a follow-up study was repeated two years later in 2015 (T2) with those children who remained in residential care. We used the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) which was completed by the key social educator of each child to assess the presence of behavioral or emotional problems and its evolution. In order to distinguish if changes in CBCL scores were clinically significant, we followed the method developed by Tarren-Sweeney (2017). This author established four groups according to scores' changes in total broadband scales of CBCL: "sustained mental health"; "meaningful improvement'; "no meaningful change'; and "meaningful deterioration". **RESULTS:** Almost 57.3% of the sample were identified as within the clinical range in some of the broadband scales of the CBCL in T1. Two years later the same instrument detected 56% of these children in that range. The findings also indicate that 29.9% of young people (*n*= 147) manifested sustained mental health; 26% (n =128) manifested meaningful improvement in their mental health; 23.5% (*n*= 116) manifested meaningful deterioration in their mental health; and the remaining 20.5% (*n*= 116) showed no meaningful change. One of the main results was that the treatment trajectory (whether or not to be in mental health treatment during the study) was a key variable in the evolution of mental health problems. Other variables such as intellectual disability or previous story of maltreatment were also associated with evolution. **CONCLUSION:** In view of these results, it is crucial to establish protocols and systematic detection tools to assess mental health evolution throughout their stay in care and to ensure detection and referral to proper treatment. Another main area is to promote effective treatments with these young people, especially those with intellectual disability given their specific needs.

The exclusion of children in care from secondary schools in England: A case of unmet attachment needs?

Dr. Eran Melkman (Tel Aviv University), Prof. Judy Sebba (Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education, University of Oxford)

Background and Purpose: Children and young people in care are one of the lowest performing groups educationally; which is closely linked with their poor employment, housing and mental health post-16 outcomes. The English government has put education at the top of its agenda for children in care, introducing additional statutory guidelines and 'Virtual Schools' to promote children's educational progress. Nevertheless, there remains the high risk of children in care to be excluded from school, undermining their chances of closing the attainment gap, and likely to affect negatively other life domains. This research explored how young people in care and key adults in their life experience and perceive school exclusion and multi-agency service provision prior to, during, and following school exclusion.

Methods: The study draws on 34 semi-structured interviews with looked after young people (9 ; ages 14-18), from 5 local authorities in England, who had been excluded from secondary school for a fixed-term in the previous two years, as well their foster carers (9), social workers (8) teachers (3), and Virtual School Heads (5).All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Common themes were identified by a constant comparative approach, coded and organised with the assistance of the NVivo software analysis package.

Findings: As expected, all interviewees came from very difficult backgrounds and had experienced a wide range of adversities. They and the adults around them emphasized that immense impact these experiences had on their subsequent learning and overall development. Relatedly, various emotional and behavioural difficulties had been reported that impeded on their ability to concentrate in school. Despite the great importance of school for these young people, it was generally experienced as a hostile environment where they felt they were not listened to, cared for or respected. These feelings were a central factor in the process that led to their exclusion. Based on Attachment theory, these dynamics are discussed as reflecting the failure of educational staff to respond to the young peoples' attachment needs and provide them with a secure base. Specifically, Schofield and Beek's (2005) Secure Base model for foster carers' parenting, and its five dimensions (availability, sensitivity, acceptance, co-operation and family membership) is offered as a useful perspective to frame teachers' relationships with young people in care and other troubled youth.

Conclusions: The findings suggest that in educating young people in care, schools should place greater emphasis on relationship-based approaches and child and foster carer participation in decision making processes in order to support their efforts to succeed in spite of their difficult backgrounds.

The experiences of trans gender and gender expanisve youth in child welfare systems

Prof. Gerald Mallon (Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College: City University of New York)

Recent research finds that youth who transgender or gender expansive are disproportionately placed in child protection and child welfare systems and are treated differently from their non-trans peers (Himmelstein and Brückner, 2011; Hunt and Moodie–Mills, 2012; Irvine, 2010; Mitchum and Moodie–Mills, 2014). Child welfare systems systems have paid little attention to this group of young people in terms of their unique service needs and risk factors. Using qualitative methods, the researcher analyze in-depth interviews with trans youth in child welfare settings to better understand their experiences. The investigator examined the challenges for the young people, and, as well as considered recommendations for staff and for facilities administrators to work toward changes in policies, practices and programs that are needed to support young people who are transgender or gender expansive.

The Extended Foster Care Evidence Base: Needing and Valuing Children and Young People's Perspectives

Dr. Iain Matheson (Research Centre for Better Outcomes for Fostering and Residential Care)

Background: Most Anglo-American jurisdictions, including those that make up the United Kingdom and the United States, have established formal extended foster care schemes. While no longer statutory care, with the agreement of both parties, these schemes allow (all or some) young people in foster care to remain with their carers beyond their statutory care leaving age, and usually up to the age of 21. While defined and framed differently, the stated intent of such schemes is essentially the same - to allow young people to transition from care at a pace and time that better suits them, and is closer to the experience of those without a care background. With some exceptions, most of these jurisdictions have established their schemes relatively recently or, like New Zealand and some Australian States, are still in the process of implementing them. COVID-19 has also led to some other *de facto* schemes arising from moratoriums on discharging young people from care when they reach their statutory care leaving age.

Meanwhile, while receiving less international attention, many non-Anglo-American countries such as Belgium, France, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Romania, and Spain, have related arrangements in place for at least some of their young people, whether that be informal extended care, quasi formal extended care, or simply having a later statutory leaving care age. Some of these arrangements predate the Anglo-American ones.

Objectives: This paper reports on a study of the international extended foster care evidence base. In doing so, the study's objectives were to firstly identify how perspectives of children and young people are being captured by researchers and others; and secondly to identity what children and young people have to say.

Methods: The study was based upon a review of published research reviews, literature reviews, and selected major research or evaluation studies.

Results: The study's overall finding was that, looking at the international evidence base as a whole, the perspectives of children and young people are largely missing. In particular what we do not know much about is whether, where it exists, extended care is valued by young people, how and why it is valued by them, and their views on how it might be strengthened or improved. We know even less about the perspectives of those children and young people who either did not know about extended foster care, chose not to ask for such an arrangement, did request it but for whatever reason it did not eventuate, or the arrangement ended prematurely. While understanding the extent to which extended foster care statistically improves average outcomes in relation to education, health, housing, parenting and offending etc. is critically important, that is only part of the evidence base picture.

Conclusion: The study's implications are explored. As well as policymakers, managers and researchers, the findings will also be of interest to practitioners and managers from a wide range of countries who are either supporting young people in care, or young people transitioning from care.

The Group Care Quality Standards Assessment: Results from a Statewide Pilot in the United States

Dr. Shamra Boel-Studt (Florida State University), Dr. Jonathan Huefner (Boys Town Child and Family Translational Research Center)

Background: Concern over the quality of residential group care is a longstanding issue that has prompted initiatives aimed at establishing quality performance standards and accountability systems. Many of these initiatives, however, are not based on research informed practices, do not utilize validated measures, and/or have failed to gain momentum due to implementation challenges.

Purpose: The Group Care Quality Standards Initiative is a collaboration between a state child welfare entity in the United States, academic researchers, service providers, and service consumers aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of residential group care. The objectives of the initiative were to develop research-informed quality performance standards for group care and to design and validate an assessment instrument to measure and monitor service quality in group homes. This initiative draws upon research and implementation science to transform residential services through the integration of evidence-supported practice standards, on-going assessment, and continuous quality improvement. During this presentation, we discuss the*Group Care Quality Standards* (2015) and *Group Care Quality Standards Assessment*(GCQSA) and share results from a statewide pilot and initial validation study.

Methods: The *Group Care Quality Standards* outline research-informed/best practice standards in eight practice domains: 1) Assessment and Service Planning, 2) Safety, 3) Monitoring and Reporting Processes, 4) Family, Culture, and Spirituality, 5) Staff Training and Supervision, 6) Program Elements, 7) Education and Life Skills and, 8) Discharge Planning. The GCQSA is a multi-dimensional, multi-informant assessment designed to measure group homes' performance on the standards. Drawing upon the frameworks of implementation science and practice, the GCQSA is embedded into the state's re-licensing process. This mixed-methods, population-based study includes assessment data collected for 160 licensed group homes in the state of Florida.

Results: A total of 1516 assessments forms were completed (youth = 450, licensing inspector = 160, lead contract agency = 272, direct care worker = 450). The majority of residential programs (63.6%) used a shift model while 36.4% used a family-style model. Services most often provided included educational training and supports, recreation, life skills development/independent living, and discharge planning. Results of a confirmatory factor analysis supported an eight factor model and reliability estimates were in the acceptable to excellent range across subscales (α = .79-96). With possible subscale scores ranging from 1 (standards are not at all met) to 5 (standards are completely met), aggregated scores across participant types show group homes scored highest on standards in the*Family, Culture, & Spirituality* (M = 4.57, SD = .40) domain and lowest on *Assessment, Admission, & Service Planning* (M = 2.88, SD = 1.19). GCQSA scores were negatively correlated with youth runaway episodes (r = -.23,p= 02), police response (r = -.40, p= .01), and youth injury (r = -.31, p= .01) and positively correlated with using a family style versus shift model (r =.26, p =.03) and being nationally accredited (r = .34, p< .000). GCQSA scores were unrelated to the number of youths in the home, use of physical restraints, or staff turnover.

Conclusions: The aim of the Quality Standard Initiative is to transform youth residential services through the integration of evidence-supported practice standards, on-going assessment, and continuous quality improvement. The findings support that a promising framework for the GCQSA has been established. The results also support the standards are associated with several indicators of care quality. Finally, we discuss lessons learned and recommendations that may guide similar efforts beyond the state of Florida.

The impact of mentoring on adolescent's well-being in an institutionalized environment

Prof. Galina Semya (Moscow State University of Psychology & Education), Dr. Alexandra Telitsyna (National Research University Higher School of Economics), Mrs. Nadezhda Zaitseva (Moscow State University of Psychology & Education)

The deinstitutionalization policy in Russia is considered to start in 2006, when the government was tasked by the President to reduce the number of children in orphanages. The attention focus of the country's top officials and substantial financial resources made it possible to significantly change the policy towards children: in 2006, 188,000 children lived in orphanages, and at the beginning of 2020-42,000 children left without parental care, of which almost 80% are teenagers, 52% are siblings, and 40% are children with disabilities.

In 2016 the changed requirements to the upbringing conditions of orphans: focus on temporary stay in an orphanage, family life, family type organization for orphans, the need to take into account the child's opinion. This helped to change the position of the child who becomes a subject, an active participant in his life scenario. Due to changes in living conditions, it was necessary to study how children assess their well-being in an orphanage. To assess the level of relative subjective well-being, a questionnaire was developed based on the UNICEF approach.

In 2018-2019, for the first time, about 1.2 thousand children aged 12 to 18 participated in the assessment of their well-being. The obtained data made it possible to identify areas of well-being and trouble in the assessments of adolescents and to identify factors that affect the subjective assessment. Adolescents in the trouble area with high rates were: supporting network, attitude to the future, knowledge about their rights, self-esteem and well-being in the organization, skills and abilities. One of the main factors that positively affect the level of subjective well-being is the presence of a mentor.

In adolescents with mentors (N = 627), the average level of relative well-being compared to the average in Russia is SB = 14.8%, in those who do not have them (N = 520) SB =18.4%.

There is a positive relative deviation from the average (growth) in terms of indicators such as well-being in the organization (50.8%), taking into account the opinion of the teenager (30.4%), the future (19.2%), knowledge of rights (18.5%). Less pronounced, but with positive values indicators: normalization of life (16%), skills (14.5%), safety (11.0%), well-being (9.7%). At the same time, all indicators of relative well-being in adolescents without mentors have negative values compared to the average in Russia.

A similar picture is observed in the presence of an adult in the organization who is trusted by the minor (N=536, SB=9.1%). In the above-listed areas of well-being - well-being in the organization (14.7%), taking into account the opinion of a teenager (14.7%), the future (12.1%) falls with the highest value of security in the organization (15%).

Thus, one of the main tasks is to develop the institution of mentoring in orphanages. One-to-one mentoring is an effective technic for at-risk youth. Psychological mechanism for overcoming the consequences of deprivation disorders- "activation of personal potential and environment", which allows to understand the life history, the system of relations to yourself and the world in a new way. It helps to restore basic trust to the world. The possibility and necessity of studying the child's point of view on their life situation set the task of developing an assessment model that would allow children of different ages to be involved in the assessment, as well as technologies for collecting, calculating and storing information.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing measures on mental health of youth and parents

Ms. Natasha Koper (Utrecht University & University of Amsterdam), Ms. Naomi Koning (University of Amsterdam), Dr. Levi van Dam (University of Amsterdam), Prof. Geert Jan Stams (University of Amsterdam), Dr. Mark Assink (University of Amsterdam), Dr. Hanneke Creemers (University of Amsterdam), Prof. Susan Branje (Utrecht University)

Background: The recent COVID-19 pandemic has pushed governments all over the world to take extraordinary and severe measures to fight the virus. Despite that measures such as locking down countries and social distancing can restrain the virus spread effectively, there may be a long-lasting negative impact on the mental health of those affected by the imposed measures. Brooks et al. (2020) recently conducted a rapid review of the psychological effects of quarantine and found negative effects on different aspects of mental health. However, this rapid review had a qualitative design and focused only on quarantine that was imposed to people diagnosed with SARS, Ebola, H1N1 influenza, or MERS, thus warranting further research on the psychological effects of measures used in the COVID-19 pandemic. In this presentation we will present two separate, complementary studies: 1) a meta-analytic study examining the effects of social distancing measures on the mental health of youth; and 2) a longitudinal study examining changes in mental health during the pandemic in youth of multi-problem families receiving youth and family care.

Objectives: This presentation aims to inform EUSARF delegates of the psychological effects on youth and parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. The meta-analytic study, specifically, aims to synthesize primary studies on the psychological effects of social distancing measures on general youth populations. The longitudinal study aims to give deeper insight into the wellbeing of the vulnerable population of multi-problem families during the pandemic. These results can be used to inform policy makers and mental health care professionals about the possible psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth and their parents.

Methods: Meta-analytic study: The studies included in this three-level meta-analysis investigated mental health or psychological effects in a quantitative matter (e.g. cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies). The participants in the studies are between 12 and 30 years old. All studies investigated a form of social distancing (e.g. 5 feet measure) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The studies included are from Western countries. If positive effects on mental health are researched, those studies will be included as well. We will exclude qualitative studies and studies that research psychological effects on health care workers. As the search for studies is still ongoing, the number of included studies is still unknown. We aim to examine moderating effects of type of social distancing measure, duration of the measure, form of wellbeing, mean age of sample, sex and several other study and sample characteristics if the studies report these data. The (preliminary) results of this meta-analysis will be presented at the EUSARF Conference 2021.

Longitudinal study: Participants are selected from among the participants of the quasi-experimental study examining the effectiveness of the InConnection approach at five organizations for youth and family care in the Netherlands (Koper et al., 2020). We will examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on families' self-reported wellbeing and resilience, and whether formal support (from youth and family care professionals) and informal support (from self-selected mentors) moderates this link. We select families that receive youth and family care before and during the pandemic, and that filled in questionnaires before and during the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic is examined using two variables: the intensity of measures (e.g., social distancing) and the self-reported influence of the pandemic on the frequency of contact with professionals and mentors. The results of this longitudinal study will be presented at the EUSARF Conference 2021.

The Impact that Age has on Post Permanency Challenges

Dr. Joan Blakey (Tulane University), Dr. Nancy Rolock (Case Western Reserve University), Mrs. Megan Wahl (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), Mrs. Amy Roehl Devine (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)

Objective: Research suggests that between 1% and 10% of adoptions result in children returning to state custody. Extant research has found that the older children are at the time of the adoption, the more difficulty they may have in adjusting to their adoptive families, which places these families at greater risk for post-placement challenges and/or discontinuity (Faulkner, Adkins, Fong, & Rolock, 2017). Other studies have found that as children reach adolescence, they are at higher risk for discontinuity regardless of their age when the adoption or the length of time they have been in the home (Rolock & White, 2016). Nevertheless, there is a dearth of literature that explores why adoptive families with older children may be at increased risk for discontinuity. The purpose of this exploratory study was to identify possible reasons that may contribute to discontinuity as children who have been adopted reach adolescence.

Method: An exploratory study was conducted to examine post-permanency challenges experienced by 20 adoptive families. A total of 4 focus groups were conducted with a total of 20 adoptive and guardianship parents. The adoptive parents' ages ranged from 32 to 59 years old, with a mean age of 44. The majority of participants were mothers (95.5%) who adopted their children anywhere from 16 months to 14 years before participation in the focus groups. The children's age ranges were varied; thirty children were 12 and under, and 15 children were 13 and older. The number of children adopted ranged from 1 to 4 per family. The sample was predominantly White (64%), with 27% African American and 1% Asian. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis involved reviewing the transcripts for accuracy; coding the interviews (Padgett, 2008); and reviewing salient themes to identify and understand plausible explanations to answer the research question as well as looking for disconfirming and corroborating alternative explanations (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results: Families were divided by how they were doing post-adoption. Data analysis revealed that most of the families who were struggling had children 12 and older, which is consistent with the literature (e.g., Liao, 2016; Tan, Major, Marn, Na, & Jackson, 2015). However, it was not the child's age that seemed to influence these families' post-adoptive experiences and put them at risk for discontinuity. Instead, age appeared to be a proxy for whether families were internally protected or externally influenced. Internally protected families referred to the extent to which the adoptive parents were in control of, took part in, and made decisions regarding what was best for their families. Internally protected families were able to insulate and protect their families from many outside forces. They were able to meet their children's needs or found ways to get their children's needs met. Externally influenced families reported an inability to limit outside forces that affected their family and children's adoptive experiences, as well as the extent to which it took away their power and control over their families.

*Conclusions:*Whether adoptive families were internally protected or externally focused, they both needed support and strategies regarding how to talk with their children about adoption, birth parents, identity, transracial adoption, and other issues unique to adoptive families. Findings from this study suggest the need for more assistance as adoptive children enter their teen years and early adulthood. The challenge is to provide tailored supports throughout the child's life in dealing with identity, attachment, and grief while at the same time emphasizing family unity and both the uniqueness and sameness of the adoptive family.

The Implementation of The Trauma-Informed Intervention Model in Non-Specialized Residential Care: A Case Study

Ms. Ivone Soares de Almeida (Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Porto),
Prof. Maria Barbosa-Ducharne (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences at the University of Porto), Prof. Elisa Veiga
(CEDH, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universidade Católica Portuguesa)

Background: In Portugal, most children and adolescents in residential care (RC) are over 15 years old (62%). All of them were exposed to dangerous conditions and had adverse and traumatic experiences, which represents a serious social and public health problem with impacts on learning, behaviour, social adaptation, and mental health. The profile of these children and adolescents is demanding, imposing an urgent change in the RC paradigm, from non-specialized to trauma-informed. This presentation refers to a research project aimed at following the implementation of the trauma-informed intervention model in a non-specialized RC centre.

The international scientific community (Whittaker et al., 2016) pointed out the need for RC facilities to adopt organizational management models, internal policies and procedures, caregivers' profile and training, physical environment, family and community relations consistent with a trauma-informed approach. Children living in RC are victims, so RC facilities must adopt intervention models that allow for recovering of adverse previous experiences, promoting a well succeeded social reintegration of care-leavers and well-being.

Objectives: The main study goals are to describe the process of change from a non-specialized to a trauma-informed model in an RC centre as well as to identify key process dimensions accounting for the changes implemented throughout three years.

Method: Using the Case Study methodology, the research includes both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection (questionnaires, observation, and document analysis). Data will be collected at different moments of the change process (before, during, and after the implementation of the model. All (45) children and adolescents in care at the target RC centre, as well as the RC staff, will participate.

Results: It is expected to identify the key issues of change in the general Organization, practices, and procedures. It is also expected that both the children and adolescents and the staff will report high levels of well-being and satisfaction. Furthermore, it is expected that children and adolescents present fewer behaviour problems and better indicators of mental health.

Discussion: The production of new knowledge resulting from scientific evidence represents a significant contribution to increasing the sensibility of the political, scientific, and social community, in order to implement a trauma-informed intervention in RC. Portugal is facing a shifting moment of the whole alternative care system. Family foster care is increasing, and non-specialized RC should become specialized trauma-informed.

Reference:

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The Interplay of Youth and Care Characteristics with a Positive Social Climate in Therapeutic Residential Youth Care

Mr. Jonathan Leipoldt (University of Groningen), Prof. Annemiek Harder (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Dr. Nanna Sønnichsen Kayed (Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare (RKBU), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).), Prof. Hans Grietens (KU Leuven), Dr. Tormod Rimehaug (Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare (RKBU), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).)

Background: Therapeutic Residential Youth Care (TRC) concerns the treatment and care of young people outside their family environment and aims to provide services to protect, care, and prepare young people for returning to life outside the institution. There is, however, limited evidence on how TRC achieves treatment goals: TRC remains too much a “black box”. More specifically, little is known about the association between contextual factors such as treatment organization, youth characteristics, and a positive social climate in TRC. One of the most basic elements necessary for treatment success is the interpersonal environment (hereafter named as social climate) that adolescents and staff members in TRC continuously are a part of. Insight into how organizational and adolescent factors interplay in predicting social climate can help TRCs to choose or tailor characteristics and strategies to their residents and to use this knowledge to guide *how*the TRCs can be improved to create more positive living environments.

Objectives: The aim of this study is to investigate differences in TRC and youth characteristics and their association with a positive perceived social TRC climate by answering the following research questions: (1) How are TRC characteristics associated with perceived social climate in TRC? (2) How are adolescent characteristics associated with perceived social climate in TRC? (3) How do adolescent characteristics and TRC characteristics interact in their association with experienced social climate in TRC?

Method: We applied a person-centered approach in a cross-sectional design with a sample of 400 adolescents and 142 staff leaders from Norwegian TRC. We analyzed youth and TRC characteristics in a latent class analysis and established groups. Thereafter, we performed a MANOVA to establish associations with social climate based on the identified TRC and youth groups in the data.

Results: The two types of TRC settings we found, i.e., larger TRC settings and family-style TRC settings, show small differences in social climate. These settings only differed on youth activities and staff shifts type (more cohabitation and unorganized activities outside TRC in family-style TRC). We identified four adolescent classes: A severe problems group, youth with incidental problems, family problems, and a migrant background group. The migrant background group showed the most positive perceptions of social climate, followed by youth with incidental problems, family problems, and severe problems. The interplay of TRC and youth characteristics was significant for the perception of involvement, which was more positive for youth with family problems in family-style TRC compared to larger TRC settings. In addition, the perception of involvement was significantly more positive for youth with incidental problems in larger TRC settings compared to family-style TRC.

Conclusions:TRC staff should acknowledge how social climate is connected to TRC characteristics and the heterogeneity of adolescents in care. As social climate is subjective and dynamic, a continuous dialogue about TRC social climate between staff and youth is recommended. During an intake, expectation management can already be performed before treatment starts, and this subsequently can increase positive and more realistic expectations. Future research should further investigate how associations between TRC, youth, and social climate characteristics are associated with treatment outcomes to increase our understanding of achieving positive outcomes in TRC.

The key-role of education for care leavers in Belgium

Mrs. Laura Gypen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Ms. Delphine West (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Dr. Frank Van Holen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Prof. Johan Vanderfaeillie (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Introduction:
Research over the past twenty years consistently shows that as a group, both foster- and residential care leavers, have low levels of educational achievement in comparison to their peers from the general population. However, education remains an important gateway to success in employment, income and housing opportunities. The main purpose of education is to prepare young people for work, to integrate them in society and to teach values and morals. As care-leavers already experience a distance between themselves and their peers from the general population, it is important to invest in opportunities to break through the often transgenerational burden of exclusion and to invest in educational success for care leavers. This study explores and predicts educational achievement of care leavers in Flanders trough their own perspective and investigates the effect of educational attainment on other outcomes (social relations, employment, income and housing).
Methods:
This study outlines preliminary results from a research project involving 363 care-leavers in Belgium (both family foster care (n=191) and residential care leavers (n=172)). The aim of the research is to better understand factors that contribute to educational success and the consequences of (not) achieving a degree. Data were collected using a self-reporting questionnaire on multiple domains. It includes both quantitative and qualitative data and focusses on the perspectives of the care leavers. The participants of the study (130 male, 233 female) are between 17 and 27 years old (Mean=21,01, SD=1,90), have been in care for an average of 9,73 years (SD=5,85) and left care between the ages of 17 and 21.
Results:
Both foster care and residential care leavers achieved significantly lower degrees than their peers from the general population. Subsequently they started working at a younger age and earned less than their peers. They were less satisfied with their degree and their housing circumstances compared to their peers. As expected, a lower educational degree was significantly associated with less social support and a higher risk of unemployment, financial- and housing problems. Regression analysis indicated that youngsters who were therapeutically supported by a psychologist during stay in care achieved higher educational outcomes. Furthermore, residential care leavers who were prepared for independency or foster care-leavers who were supported by their foster siblings when leaving care, achieved better educational outcomes.
Discussion and conclusion:
The educational outcomes of care leavers in Belgium are significantly lower compared to non-care leavers. The current study confirmed that obtaining a degree is an important predictive factor for later employment, income and housing conditions. It is therefore important to support young care leavers to obtain their degree and to invest in further education so care leavers get equal opportunities in our society. Care leavers are significantly less satisfied with their own results and ask for more support during and after leaving care. Policy makers should focus on more support for education during placement. School- and placement changes should be minimized and society must invest in psychological support during the placement. Preparing youth for independency and aftercare are crucial factors for later success.

The Motherhood and Me study: Methodological advances in recruiting and retaining women with needs associated with child protection intervention in longitudinal research

Dr. Tatiana Corrales (The University of Melbourne), Prof. Sarah Wise (The University of Melbourne)

Australian infants are removed from their families and placed in out-of-home care at globally high and increasing rates, causing mothers great suffering, disrupting natural processes of attachment formation and placing very young children at risk of family and cultural disconnection and unstable care.

Motherhood and Me is a preliminary, 4-wave prospective longitudinal cohort study being carried out in Victoria, Australia. It aims to generate urgently needed new knowledge about the strengths and resilience of high-risk pregnant women, how child protection decisions impact on the early life course trajectories of the most vulnerable infants, and how services can work earlier and more effectively to prevent infants entering care or to restore them to birth parents. It also functions as a 'dress-rehearsal' for accessing and retaining a larger sample of women in Victoria and NSW.

This paper describes the *Motherhood and Me* research aims, the innovative approach to directly involve women as research participants and the conceptual model guiding the data collection before focusing in on the engagement and retention of women over the first two waves of the study (pre-birth and 3 months following birth). Here, approaches to sampling, gaining co-operation and participant consent, retention and data collection are discussed in terms of what worked well in field as well as aspects of difficulty. The paper concludes with a discussion of the feasibility of following and collecting primary data from this hard to reach population and methodological advances from the *Motherhood and Me* study.

The paradox of sociojudicial interventions and the transition to adulthood in Quebec

Ms. Marie Dumollard (National public school of administration (ENAP), CREVAJ / Rennes 1 University, Arènes), Prof. Martin Goyette (National public school of Administration (ENAP), CREVAJ), Prof. Patricia Loncle (Rennes 1 University, Arènes)

This presentation explores how Quebec's juvenile justice system and child welfare (i.e. sociojudicial interventions) support young offenders and, among them, cross-over youth during their transition to adulthood.

When they turn 18, young offenders and cross-over youth confront a triple challenge. First is the transition to adulthood, which is more complex for vulnerable youth, who have accumulated multiple set-backs (Becquet, 2012; Goyette, Pontbriand, & Bellot, 2011). This transition is a challenge for young offenders (Kang, 2019) and even more for cross-over youth (Herz & al, 2019). Second is the challenge of desisting from crime, a non-linear process (Farrall, Sharpe, Hunter, & Calverley, 2011; Gaïa, de Larminat, & Benazeth, 2019; Laub & Sampson, 2001), and social expectation associated with aging (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010) : offenders tend to stop committing crimes when they get older (Farrington, 1986). They also run the risk of being sentenced in the adult justice system if they re-offend. Third, young offenders transition from the juvenile justice system and, frequently, from the child welfare to seeking social support from general community-based youth services. While prior research has examined these different and simultaneously occurring transitions, little is known about how sociojudicial interventions in Quebec influence the life course and transition to adulthood of young offenders and cross-over youth. The present study looks at the role these interventions play in structuring the juvenile life-course and the coping strategies young people develop in response.

This presentation is based on life-course narratives and semi-structured interviews with 16 young offenders in Quebec, some of whom are cross-over youth, aged between 17 and 19 years old. At the time of the interview, they had been sentenced to one of two specific non-custodial measures – probation or "surveillance in the community" (i.e. where the last third of the sentence is served in the community). In the Youth Criminal Justice Act of 2003 and its update in 2012, these types of sentence are expected to promote both public safety and young offenders' prospects for rehabilitation. Here, we explore youth's perspectives on these interventions, in interaction with those in the child welfare, during their transition to adulthood.

Findings reveal that young people are ambivalent about sociojudicial interventions in the juvenile justice system and in child welfare in Quebec, which appear somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, interventions support youth in their life-projects in accordance with social work traditions. On the other hand, they envelop youth in surveillance and control systems to prevent future criminal activity. Research participants describe a degree of continuity in interventions along their institutional trajectories (i.e in criminal interventions like in child welfare), but also adopt strategies to adjust to the inherent tension between rehabilitation and regulation in criminal interventions. These range from compliance with legal obligations to bending the rules imposed by their criminal sentence. In the process, young people adopt specific perspectives on the social rights and supports available to them in youth social policies.

Finally, this research suggests areas of particular importance for research and practice. It finds that the two objectives of the Youth Criminal JusticeAact – protecting society against recidivism and regulating young offenders' behaviour – can sometimes be irreconcilable with objectives of rehabilitating young offenders. The experience of youth within this system also underlines the lack of multidimensional and intersectorial support provided by juvenile justice system interventions when the risk of re-offending is considered high.

The parenting experience of parents of children placed with an extended family member under the lens of relational issues

Mrs. Amilie Dorval (Université de Montréal), Dr. Sonia Hélie (I'Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté), Prof. Poirier Marie-Andree (Université)

Parents of children in care are little-heard actors in the scientific literature on foster care. Very little is known about their experience of parenting and this is especially true when placement is within the extended family, where important relational factors come into play. The literature on kinship care placement points directly about the specificity of relationships in kinship care and the importance of considering these relationship issues. The objective of this presentation is to expose the parenting experience of parents who undergo permanent placement of their child with a family member. The life story methodology was favored in this qualitative research. Thus, life stories of nine parents, who were met twice, were collated and constitute the material presented.

The analysis of the narratives led to the emergence of an exploratory typology in which three groups of parents were identified. These three groups clearly distinguish themselves in terms of their relationship with their child's caregiver, but also in terms of the relationship the parent has with the youth protection institution. The experience of parenthood also takes a different shape according to the groups. For a first group of parents, the experience of kinship care placement is more positive, with parents in this group describing good relations with the kinship caregiver and speak little about their experience with youth protection services.

On the opposite, parents in the second group describe tense relationships with the kin caregiver and speak at length in their accounts of their difficult experience with child welfare services. They report not feeling recognized and considered by the services. They also described how their parenting is influenced by this decision of placement. A third group of parents completes the typology. This third group is less characterized by cleavage between good versus difficult relational dynamics, but refers to another relational dyad that influences the experience of parenthood and placement: the conjugal relationship. The parent in this group describes a mixed relationship with the kin and a strained relation with the institution. It appears that marital relation also adds to the complexity of relationship issues.

Finally, these results are discussed by highlighting the parents' experience and possible clinical levers. The typology obtained reiterates the importance of carefully assessing the relational dynamics existing within families and the potential effects on the different actors involved in placement. These results raise the need to support parents in the permanent placement of their child.

The perspective and the Rights of the (forcibly) separated child

Mrs. Adriana Morao (CIS-IUL)

Evidence suggests that forcibly separating children from their parents or caregivers is a potentially traumatic event for children, with long-lasting, damaging effects in their physical health, emotional and psychosocial well-being. Separated children have also been described to often share a damaged and difficult to restore sense of belonging. Despite being irrespective of Children's Rights, policies and regulations around the World regarding child residential care and child detention still seem to ignore how forcibly separating children from their parents and placing them in institutionali settings has an enduring negative impact on their life chances.
Objectives: We will conduct a brief literature review to provide an overview and summary of the findings regarding the impact of forcibly separating children and youth from their parents or main caregivers.

Method: Departing from Hamish Canham (1998) metaphor on children living in institutional settings resembling being in "station waiting rooms", we conducted a literature review focusing on the scary perspective of children separated from her parents and caregivers before reaching the institutional setting, the toxic stress it generates and its impact on their well-being, sense of belonging and future life chances. Search terms such as "child separation", "child removal" and other keywords related to this topic (including "toxic stress", sense of belonging", "unaccompanied", "migrant children") were entered on several databases.

Results: Literature highlights that children's life chances, health, development, but also the parent/child bond is often damaged by forcible separation. Institutional setting features might present further constraints on repairing the damaging effects resulting from separation, or might even aggravate them, especially when regarding young children and migrant or unaccompanied children and youth.

Conclusions: Further discussion and awareness regarding Children's Rights, and the deleterious, long-term and sometimes irreversible effects of forcible child separation is needed, in order to better inform practices and interventions and to implemment changes in public policies and regulations.

The practice theory of Support Family intervention from a child perspective

Dr. Anu-Riina Svenlin (University of Jyväskylä, Kokkolan University Consortium Chydenius), Dr. Tiina Lehto-Lundén (Metropolia University of Applied Sciences)

The presentation is a synthesis of two recent PhD research projects on Support Family as a child welfare intervention in Finland. Support Families are volunteers who provide community-based support to children and parents coping with a range of psycho-social challenges. Similar interventions are used in other Nordic countries. Support Family can also be defined as respite care provided in child welfare settings or as an example of short-term fostering. The child usually spends one weekend a month with a Support Family. At the same time the parent has a possibility to have breath.

The aim of the presentation is to focus on the voice of the child and provide understanding of children's subjective perspective of the intervention. The presentation will also provide an example how research results can be applied in practice and of how a holistic and cohesive child approach can enhance and clarify the position of the child as recipient of the child welfare services.

The practice theory of the Support Family intervention (Svenlin 2020) refers to an informal theory, sometimes described as 'practice wisdom' in social work. The practice theory represents social workers' view and an adult view on how the intervention strengthen the well-being of the child. It guides the use of the intervention. Practice theory covers the aims, the process and the content of the intervention. In the presentation, the focus is to critically analyze the practice theory from the child perspective and to discuss how the child is represented in the theory. The practice theory will be compared to the results of a phenomenological study of children's experiences of Support Family service (Lehto-Lundén 2020).

In the practice theory, it is pointed out that the child is the main recipient of the support and that the aim is to strengthen the developmental age and stage of the child, to provide new skills as well trustful relationships and role models to the child. The phenomenological study of children's experiences crystallizes the intervention into a set of relationships, places, activities, material and travelling between the home and the Support Family. Children's experiences show that interactive relationships with adults in Support Family are essential, but relationships with bonus-siblings and pets also play an important role. The child can also develop an attachment relationship to the support family's environment, in addition to the relationships they have with the Support Family members.

Research results indicate that the social workers need to evaluate and follow the intervention systematically and on regular basis. Only then it is possible to assure that the 1) child has knowledge about what is a Support Family and 2) that the child is aware of why it becomes part of his or her life and 3) the child benefits of the support. The conclusion is that when the child is seen as a main recipient of the support, it is necessary to pay attention and understand how the child experiences the support. In order to evaluate Support Family intervention, it is important to take into consideration how the child is affected by the Support Family.

The representation of the perspective of foster children in contemporary films

Dr. Teresa Diaz (Universidad CEU San Pablo), Dr. Juan Orellana (Universidad CEU San Pablo)

Keywords: family foster care, family relationships, double belonging, loyalty conflict, child perspective, film analysis, child representation.

Objective: The objective of this research is to offer an analysis on how the experience of foster children is depicted in several contemporary films looking for possible applications to improve the practice of foster care. With this analysis we try to offer useful content that can be taken into account and used by professionals in order to help everyone involved in the foster care process to understand more in depth different aspects of the experiences that children have in family care of various types that these films allow us to get close to.

The specific objectives are:

1. To describe the context and the case shown in each film so that the scope of the various issues that arise in its scripts can be sufficiently understood;
2. To analyse how the experiences that children have are presented and what practical implications shown in each film can be taken into account;
3. To analyse how these films represent the position of children towards families, both biological and foster, and the corresponding implications for practice that arise from addressing this data;
4. To analyse how these films show social workers from child´s perspective
5. To identify what influence the ways of acting and attitudes of the various characters in the film have on the child, indicating the possible implications that they may have for practice;
6. To propose, through the film analysis, possible lines of work that are opened for professionals involved in any family care by watching these films in order to improve the well-being of children:

a. What can make technicians improve their understanding of foster care problems by watching these movies and what they can do to contribute to change by making the families watch the films focusing on the child perspective;

b. Identify which factors shown in the film favour the well-being of children and which ones make it difficult;

c. Offer proposals that can help children improve experiences in their relationships;

Method

1. Carrying out a filmic oriented analysis to identify thematic areas of interest that can be presented to children and their families as work material that allows them to reflect and improve their experiences of foster care.
2. Identification, through narrative analysis and script analysis, of key areas of work for professionals who support children and foster families, leaders of training programs, follow-up and support groups that would lead to the building of fruitful support lines.

Results

- We have found interesting information about the type of interactions between all parties involved in fostering;
- We have also identified examples of a healthy way of dealing with family relationships and examples of deficits;
- The exploration has allowed access to individual and family dynamics offering rich descriptions that can be used to propose effective support.

Conclusions

The results show how useful it is to use films to support families. This research will allow children, families and professionals to become more aware of the nature of their life experiences and send messages regarding their wishes, hopes and fears.

This information is crucial in order to prevent probable problems and future failures and to improve practices.

The right to participation of children and adolescents: an analysis of Spanish legislation.

Ms. Anna Massons Ribas (Departament of Pedadogy. University of Lleida), Dr. M. Àngels Balsells Bailón (Departament of Pedagogy. University of Lleida), Dr. NEUS CORTADA (Department of Private Law. University of Lleida)

*Background:*The right to child participation is one of the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), specifically in Article 12; however, child participation in the protection system remains a challenge to achieve. A paradigm shift is needed to a situation where children are considered as active subjects of rights in all areas of their lives, and it means that they are allowed to participate in decisions that concern them. Decision-making in child protection is an area that is focus on children's participation and how professionals can promote it. (Balsells et al., 2017; Benbenishty et al., 2015). In order, for participation, to become a fact and not merely a theory, legislation needs to back it. Participation, according to Bouma et al. is divided into three dimensions: informing, hearing and involving. Several studies agree that child participation in the protection system ensures more effective and positive outcomes in protection planning (Barnes, 2012; Mcleod, 2007 and Schofiled and Beek, 2005). This study is part of the Coordinated R&D Project entitled "A socio-educational action model for family reunification in the child and adolescent protection system from a positive parenting approach (FRAME+P)- RTI2018-099305-B-C21", funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. One of its goals is to promote the processes of family participation, and this study aims to understand the necessary legal conditions for the participation of children and adolescents. Thus, the current Spanish legislation is analyzed, both at state and regional level.

Objective: To analyze how Spanish legislation, both national and regional, has dealt with the child's right to participation, specifically in the protection system and especially throughout the situacion of neglected.

Method: The different Spanish laws regulating child protection and children's rights in the protection system have been examined. The study included N=20 state and regional laws. Although the LOPJM (Spanish law) constitutes the framework of reference and/or interpretation, the 17 Autonomous Communities of Spain, as a result of the distribution of powers under the Spanish Constitution, have their own legislation on the protection of minors. The analysis focuses on analyzing children's right to participation in the protection system, divided into its 3 dimensions (the right to be informed, the right to be heard and the right to be involved). Each dimension has been studied in detail, as well as distinguishing when and in what situations it should be applied.

Results: The Convention on the Rights of the Child was taken into account in all the legislation studied. All of them regulate the rights to be informed, to be heard and to be involved, which make up the child's right to participation in the protection system.

Conclusions: In the analysis of the state and regional legislation, it has been possible to verify the complexity of the different regulations, as well as the nuances that exist between them. Although it is true that all of them are adapted to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and contemplate the three dimensions of the right to participation, not all of them do so with the same degree of compliance. In Spain, some Autonomous Communities are still active and advanced in the field of child protection, while others have been stagnated for several years. It should also be noted that there is a lack of unification between Autonomous Community legislation, specifically in terms of terminology and procedures, which causes practical difficulties for the professionals who have to apply the legislation on a daily basis.

The role of a Sexual Health Nurse (Educator) working with children and young people in Residential Care – the Power to Kids: Respecting Sexual Safety pilot program

Ms. Ana Fried (MacKillop Family Services), Dr. Gemma McKibbin (University of Melbourne)

Background

MacKillop Family Services (MacKillop) and the University of Melbourne co-designed and trialled Power to Kids: Respecting Sexual Safety, a program to intervene early in child sexual exploitation (CSE), harmful sexual behaviours (HSB) and dating violence (DV) for children and young people living in out-of-home care. The initiative was developed in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia and the further evidence that a lack of knowledge regarding sexual health and sexual safety increases the vulnerability of children and young people placed in out-of-home care to sexual abuse.

Method

The program is made up of three prevention strategies: (i) whole of house respectful relationships and sexuality education; (ii) missing from home strategy; and (iii) sexual safety response. Implementation of the program in four pilot houses was guided by the Knowledge to Action Framework. Qualitative data were collected through 10 feedback loops with champions, as well as interviews with 20 workers and 10 children and young people. The quantitative sample included 60 workers (residential carers, clinicians, and managers) in the first wave of data collection and 34 in the second. This presentation explores the role of the Sexual Health Nurse (Educator), who delivered trauma-informed sexual health and safety coaching to residential care workers using the Brave Conversations model (Faulkner & Schegren, 2016).

Results

The role of the Sexual Health Nurse (Educator) can be understood in relation to individual, collaborative, organisational and systems levels. On an individual level, before the Nurse was appointed, there was significant apprehension among carers and operational staff around sexual health and safety issues. The Nurse implemented a grounded and factual approach to sexual health and safety with a trauma-informed lens. After the intervention, increases were recorded in both the knowledge of workers, and their confidence in having discussions with children and young people on a range of sexual health and safety topics. On a collaborative level, as the role and expertise of the Nurse became known to staff, workers at various levels requested support when faced with sexual health and safety situations that they were having difficulty managing. Organisationally, staff identified the benefits of having access to specialist in-house support to engage with children and young people in conversations about sexual health and safety. The Nurse fostered a culture where sexual health and safety conversations were embedded into day-to-day activities for children and young people. On a systems level, it is evident that the Sexual Health Nurse (educator) role is not replicated across jurisdictions, posing challenges for the upscale of the Power to Kids program.

Conclusion

The Sexual Health Nurse (Educator) role enabled the embedding of sexual health and safety conversations into everyday organisational culture and practise. The success of the pilot coupled with the urgent need for successful evidence-based interventions in this context has led Mackillop to upscale the program state-wide, with current planning for a national roll out.

The role of expert evidence in facilitating child participation in care and adoptions

Ms. Peiling Kong (The University of Sydney), Prof. Rita Shackel (Sydney Law School, University of Sydney), Prof. Judith Cashmore (The University of Sydney), Dr. Amy Conley Wright (The University of Sydney)

Conference themes

Assessment and decision making in child welfare and protection

Objectives

In New South Wales (NSW), Australia, children's experiences of participation in care differ substantially from children who are involved in adoptions proceedings. Children in care are able to express their views to their caseworkers and they are generally legally represented and assessed by court appointed experts. Expert reports in care matters will often include children's views and wishes. In contrast, children in adoption proceedings are rarely legally represented and their views, needs, and best interests are often expressed through expert reports. Hence, court appointed experts play a significant role in facilitating child participation in decision-making and future care planning.

Whilst court appointed experts are potentially valuable facilitators of child participation, it is posited that procedural differences as well as varied approaches between expert practice are factors that impact how well children are heard. To date, there is a dearth of research into the quality of expert evidence and its role on judicial outcomes for children in care and adoptions in Australia. The primary focus of this PhD research is to investigate the efficacy of court appointed experts in facilitating child participation within care and adoption proceedings in NSW. This PhD project also reviews how expert evidence achieve balance between children's autonomy and their best interests in care and adoption proceedings.

Method

This research utilises a mixed methods approach and comparative analyses, with a three-stage data collection process. Stage 1 involves semi-structured individual interviews with authorised clinicians (n= 30) and adoptions assessors (n= 30) in NSW. Stage 2 includes the review and thematic analyses of 60 care assessment reports and 80 adoption assessment reports. Stage 3 involves the review of 60 care court files and 80 adoption court files from finalised proceedings. This method of triangulation seeks to review and compare how experts conduct care and adoption assessments, how children's views are ascertained (particularly children with cognitive disabilities, language barriers, or mental health concerns), and which factors or variables are prioritised when recommendations are made about future care of the children.

The guiding research questions this project include: How effectively are children's views represented via expert assessment and evidence in care and adoptions matters compared to best practice guidelines and child participation principles? Which factors impact how much weight experts place on children's views and wishes in care and adoptions matters? To what extent do children's views in expert reports influence judicial outcomes about care and adoption?

Results

Preliminary findings will be presented, including the review of variables that influence how much weight experts place on children's views and their subsequent recommendations to the court. Such variables include processes undertaken by experts taking children's views into account whist making recommendations in their best interests, the age of the child and their evolving capacities, and children's attachments to their caregivers, and identity and cultural needs.

The role of information when social workers make decisions about emergency removals of children in ‘immediate danger‘

Mrs. Tuuli Lamponen (Tampere University/Faculty of Social Sciences)

When social workers assess whether the child is in immediate danger, the available information is crucial for making sound judgments. Social workers have to make sense of the information in situations which can take a place on any time of the day and where they may face the lack or overload of information along with high level of emotional impact and stress. At the same time, they are forced to gather more information often hastily within a limited time-frame in order to decide whether the child needs to be placed out of his/her home by an emergency placement.

The objective of this presentation is to explore what kind of information social workers use in their assessment and decision-making processes when a child is in immediate danger. The question is, what information social workers adopt, how they understand and conceptualize the gathered information and how they place the information in assessment and decision-making process.

The findings are based on thematic analysis of the interview data of 51 front-line social workers in two Finnish municipalities, and observation data during the period of 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork. The data was gathered as part of PhD- study *´ Decision-making of emergency placements in child protection*‘which examines the decision-making process on individual level (how front-line social workers make decisions institutions where child is in danger) and community/ system level (how decision- making is instructed by legislation and other formal regulation).

When speaking about information in practice, the interviewed social workers used 77 different expressions to describe their work with information. Social workers emphasize the rational and analytical way of making sense of the information, but intuition is also included as well as other ways of working through the information such as using their emotional intelligence, expertise and experiential knowledge.

The findings suggest four different functions for information they use. First, they use a variety of different types of information such as facts, sensory perceptions and intuition. Secondly, information is used for different purposes as a functional tool in assessment and decision- making. In other words, it refers to social worker´s practices of using information in present situation.

Thirdly, the assessment and decision-making processes are built up on the foundation of different types of information as the information has a fundamental and inseparable role in the assessment and decision- making processes. Fourthly, the information has a power function in social workers decision-making. The different types of information (from different sources) seems to have varying weight when social worker decides about the need of the emergency placement. Therefore, the power that information consists may influence the outcome of the social workers sound judgement in the emergency situation.

The findings highlight the assessment and the decision- making as a complex and demanding knowledge work which includes choosing and excluding the information. In the emergency situations, it is rather difficult to point out any specific information or fact that would routinely guide the judgement. On the contrary, these situations where child is immediate danger, the knowledge work including multiple sense- making of the various information, varies in every case. The social workers understanding of whether the child is in immediate danger is builds up on the foundation of the knowledge work.

The Role of Psychologists within Adoption Procedures in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Challenges and Interventions.

Ms. Lucia Coler (University of Buenos Aires)

Children separated from their birth families because of abuse, violence and negligence is the main cause of adoption in Argentina. The New Civil Code (2015) has set a new legal frame to adoption practices, emphasizing the Right to Participation, the respect of children's identity and the exhaustion of possibilities for the child to remain in his/her birth or extended family.

Moreover, although the national legislation as well as de CRC states that no child should be separated from their family because of economical reasons (poverty) the practice demonstrate that children facing family separation come from an economical disadvantage background. In this respect, a recent report made by Unicef about the situation of children in Argentina (2018) implies a relationship between violence perpetrated to children and the economical situation in the country based on frustration, despair and hopelessness.

Furthermore, the New Civil Code has shortened the time for child separation cases to be resolved in order to prevent extended institutional care, and accelerate the process of adoption procedures for the child to enjoy the Right to Have a Family. This is understandable in terms of the negative effects that institutional care has on children's wellbeing, physical and mental health as well as the need to guarantee their Rights. However, this decisions is particularly important on children's lives and therefore it requires time to think thoroughly what is the child's best interest. In this respect, the need to find an answer in short time could affect the possibility to reflex on the best strategies and the success of it. Additionally, the role of psychologist has become very required in these situations, making the psychological diagnosis and reports essential for judges to decide about the life course of children in family matters.

For this on-going doctoral research, qualitative interviews have been conducted to psychologists who work in institutions implied in adoption procedures. Also, judicial documents of children who were adopted were studied. This research focuses in the ethics of psychologists working in this field, meaning that the practice of psychologist should emphasize on analyse and focus on the singularities of each child and situation. In this respect, in the daily practice some ethical dilemmas occur when the logics (and timing) of legal aspects of adoption are different from the logics of children and families as human beings.

This study interrogates whether the new changes in the Argentinian legislation do really promote the child as the centre in the adoption procedure and whether it contemplates their subjectivity and singularity in the situation. The research reflects about the ideals and morals of childhood that crisscross the work of psychologists and how it shapes the decision about adoption.

Finally, it is worth noticing the aim of psychologists working in this field considering children as subject of rights, focusing and highlighting the adoption process as a need for a child to have a family and not as need for a family to have a child, something that has ultimately being confused.

The role of targeting in measuring efficacy in a supportive housing program

Dr. Bridgette Lery (Urban Institute), Dr. Anne Farrell (Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago), Ms. Jennifer Haight (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau)

Objectives: This paper discusses targeting as an essential bridge from social experimentation to implementation in real-world agencies where demonstrating efficacy is the expectation. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau (CB) funded five sites nationally to design, implement, and evaluate over five years permanent supportive housing (SH) models for child welfare-involved families experiencing homelessness. Goals were to prevent foster placement or reunify children already in out-of-home care.

Method: All sites used a randomized controlled trial design. The CB required sites to target families who were 1) at the highest risk of failure on these outcomes, and 2) who stood to benefit the most from intervention. Presenters from the State of Connecticut and the City and County of San Francisco demonstration sites will compare and contrast how they approached the task of identifying a target population according to CB guidelines and its effect on the ability to observe impact.

Findings and Implications: Both sites developed eligibility criteria around homelessness and co-occurring risk. Connecticut limited eligibility to families with three or more co-occurring risks and developed a tool to systematically screen families for eligibility. The result was a target population of homeless, multi-need families with a high risk of either placement or failure to reunify. San Francisco also sought to find families for whom placement was likely or reunification was unlikely. These evaluators used administrative data from a prior period to empirically establish that baseline rates for outcomes were sufficiently poor among homeless families with only one or more (rather than three or more) co-occurring risks to set moderately large effect size expectations. These targeting choices affected findings in both sites.

The control group outcomes in Connecticut were quite negative, suggesting that targeting was successful. Indeed, Connecticut found significant causal effects. In the project planning period, San Francisco observed relatively low base rates in the target population but those base rates improved over the intervention, such that the gap between treatment and control outcomes diminished. While some child welfare outcomes trended in the desired direction for treatment families, the difference between the two experimental groups did not rise to a level of significance.

Second, some target families randomized into the treatment group in San Francisco did not complete the program. An intent-to-treat design requires all randomized families to remain in the analysis of outcomes. The result was a diluted treatment effect. Evaluators will discuss what characterized the non-completers and to what extent future research might refine the targeting criteria in order to better align family needs with intervention strategies. Interestingly, Connecticut did not experience the same attrition problem. Both sites will discuss to what extent findings were attributable to targeting strategy, implementation, and underlying characteristics of the target populations.

The role of uncertainty in professionals' thinking when working with children who harm other people

Dr. Heron Gavin (University of Strathclyde)

Objectives

People often want to reduce uncertainty because they experience it as threatening, whilst at other times, it allows people to maintain hope and optimism. Child care professionals operate in situations where there are often competing versions of events, different interpretations of information, incomplete information and several plausible outcomes. Yet, many professionals rush to categorise information into certainties because of organisational pressures and practices that seek to minimise ambiguity and uncertainty. This might limit their ability to analyse the complexities of practice. This presentation reports on a research study which examines the way uncertainly is demonstrated in the discussions between professionals in relation to children who present a serious threat of harm to others. The study aims to:

- identify the extent to which uncertainty is demonstrated when professionals discuss vulnerable children
- analyse the specific incidents in which uncertainty is demonstrated.

Understanding the way professionals demonstrate uncertainty provides further insight into the way in which the needs and voices of vulnerable children can be supported or denied within assessment and intervention strategies.

Method

Discourse analysis is used to examine levels of uncertainty from 25 consultation meetings. Data is obtained from a project based in Scotland that offers a specialist psychological and social work service for children who present a serious risk of harm to other people and who are themselves at risk. The majority of children discussed at the consultation meetings have experiences of abuse and neglect and are in the care of the local authority (e.g. residential home, foster care). All of the consultation meetings are audio recorded and comprise of between five and 10 professionals (i.e. social worker, teacher, residential worker, police officer, psychologist, nurse and psychiatrist). The meetings are scheduled for a duration of two hours.

Results

The findings suggest that considerable variation exists in the level of uncertainty when professionals discuss children who present a serious risk of harm to other people. It is suggested that uncertainty should be viewed as an essential aspect of communication when working with vulnerable children. There are practical considerations for maintaining and indeed enhancing uncertainty in our thinking. First, using open-ended questions from peers is an effective way of prompting uncertainty in professionals' thinking. Professionals should therefore, establish practice contexts that encourage probing and challenging questions as a strategy for eliciting and expressing uncertainty. Second, overly descriptive accounts of children's background or history should be discouraged, particularly when presented as a list of problems and negative behaviours. These descriptive accounts of children are often time-consuming and reduce opportunities to demonstrate uncertainty within more analytical thinking. Third, patterns of dichotomous thinking appear to be more prevalent when low levels of uncertainty exist in discussions. Subsequently, limited or low levels of uncertainty in complex child care situations may reflect a rather fragile professional perspective that is easily undermined when challenged.

Conclusion

The extent to which findings in this study can be implemented in a practice context is less than straightforward. The technical-rational approach dominating social work in Britain is not conducive to child care professionals who want to remain uncertain for longer when working with vulnerable children. Nevertheless, taking greater responsibility for expressing uncertainty is one way for professionals to in increase the robustness of their thinking and be more equipped to meet the needs of children.

The significance of the interactions between informal relationships, social capital and other social supports to the prospects of young people leaving out of home care

Ms. Jacinta Waugh (Monash University)

This paper will discuss the findings of an exploratory, largely qualitative study of the informal social resources available to young care leavers in their transition to adulthood. This study examines how the separate but connected concepts of social support (e.g. emotional, practical, informational) and social capital (e.g. bonding, bridging, linking) work together in the lives of care leavers.

My first EUSARF presentation (2014) noted an injurious feature common to the experience of care leavers – namely their abrupt, compressed and accelerated transitions to adulthood. There remains a correlation between this type of transition and care leavers' negative outcomes. The study therefore assumes a fundamental need among care leavers for normative social experiences and gradual, managed transitions. The international literature confirms the importance of positive informal supports of the kind typically provided by family and extended social networks. The benefit of such networks is the mediating function they perform in a young person's transition to adulthood.

EUSARF 2021 and its overarching theme provides a timely platform for the intended presentation. This is because the advanced current stage of my research better reflects the perspective of the young people I've studied than earlier stages, where the findings were more provisional. Better rather than exclusively reflects as the data is based equally on the interviews with young people transitioning out of state care and interviews with the people they nominate as their most significant informal relationships. It's not surprising that the latter category contains more of the material we might expect of exemplars – it tends to be expository in character. But the really animating insights are found in the first-person testimony of the young care leavers' more expansive responses.

This study examines the different types and intensity levels of informal support which impact care leavers' lives. More importantly, it sheds necessary light on how these informal processes work. Certain combinations of social support and social capital help meet the needs of young people. For example, and unsurprisingly, practical and informational supports facilitated through 'bonding' and 'norms revolving around expectations' capital help meet the needs for independent living skills. Esteem support helps meet identity needs in relation to feelings of self-worth and may be considered distinct from the provision of emotional support.

Establishing a varied network of constructive informal relationships while the young person is in care is the best broad policy prescription. The data suggests that positive informal relationships established gradually are indispensable in navigating the transition to the young person's post care life, and the varied challenges it presents.

This Doctoral research is being carried out in the Department of Social Work at Monash University, Australia.

The Space to be Myself: The Participation of LGBTQIA+ Youth in Out-of-home Care

Mr. Rodrigo González Álvarez (University of Groningen), Dr. Mijntje ten Brummelaar (University of Groningen), Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen)

Objectives

In various countries around the globe, youth participation in child welfare and child protection is increasingly being acknowledged as a powerful 'tool' for young people to influence the decisions that affect their lives to the core. Youth participation has become part of both the public and scientific discourse (Gal, 2017) and has influenced the development of policy and child-friendly practices in this context. Despite the importance of youth participation in child welfare and child protection and its potential benefits, putting participation into practice has not always demonstrated easy. Studies have shown that young people oftentimes lack a true voice in decisions about their own lives (e.g., Bouma, 2019, Van Bijleveld, 2019). The barriers that limit the opportunity to participate in decisions are experienced by many children and young people, however some groups might face multiple and far-reaching challenges when it comes to participation in child welfare and child protection decisions. This is especially true for LGBTQIA+ children and young people who are in contact with the child welfare and child protection system during their childhood. Since LGBTQIA+ young people are still subjected to discrimination, oppression and stigmatization, both in our care systems and in society, they therefore could face additional challenges when it comes to participation (Mallon, 2019; MacCormick, 2018).

Method

We conducted a qualitative study (the Audre project) on the experiences, needs and wishes of LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults in out-of-home care in the Netherlands. A total of 13 young people reflected on their time in out-of-home care (e.g., foster care, secure residential care placements, independent living programs, treatment groups) and their ideas on how to strengthen services and practices for LGBTQIA+ youth. Furthermore, the Audre project focused on the perceptions of 29 carers (e.g., practitioners and foster carers), and the policy documents of several of Dutch youth care organizations. In this presentation we will pay special attention to the stories of young people who stayed in out-of-home care and their experiences of participation during their time in care.

Results and conclusions

Young people experience limited opportunities to participate in decision-making procedures while in care. Some young people even experience unwelcoming care environments that prevent them from a meaningful participation process. The stories of young people reveal the importance of a sensitive and affirmative environment within care facilities, the need for a connection with staff that operate in these facilities, the need to being informed and prepared for decisions both prior, during and after care, and to have the space to be themselves. Young people want to be seen, heard and affirmed in who they are. With these findings, we aim to gain further insight on how to create safe and sensitive care practices for LGBTQIA+ youth.

The Theory and Practice of Children, Youth, and Young People's Participation in Research, As Both Sources and Creators of Evidence.

Dr. Kurt Moore (Indep), Prof. John Fluke (UvCoad)

This workshop on the topic of children as partners in research is proposed to occur following the symposium **Ethical considerations when looking at the perspective of the child**. Contributors include: Cora Bartelink, Rob Gilsing, & Cathelijne Mieloo , De Haagse Hogeschool | Faculteit Sociaal Werk & Educatie, NL, Julie Chapeau (Université Paris Nanterre, France), Roberta Ruggiero, Centre for Children's Rights Studies, University of Geneva, Switzerland, John Fluke, University of Colorado, Mónica López López and Mijntje ten Brummelaar, University of Groningen.

There are several reasons to incorporate children as partners in research and evaluation. The UN Convention on Rights of the Child (Article 12 and Article 13) calls for children to have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account. Across all age groups and cultures, there is an increasing awareness of the right to participate fully in discussions and decisions that affect peoples' lives, sometimes expressed as "nothing about us without us". On a utilitarian level, decades of research have found clear benefits from service recipients' partnership in decision-making. These benefits include improved services, improved engagement, increased service plan compliance, and better outcomes.

During this workshop, participants will identify, discuss, and assess several topics important for operationalizing the goal of children's partnership in research. Some topic areas and specific questions may emerge during the preceding symposium, but are likely to include:

Ethics

- Do we need to have 'appropriate' expectations of collaborating with children? And if so why?
- What are appropriate expectations of partnering children, developmentally?
- What are the ethics concerns?
- How can ethical guidelines be shared and enforced?
- How can ethical guidelines be adjusted to children living contexts?

Methods & Tools

- What are reasonable roles for children in different types of research?
- Are there inappropriate or unworkable roles?
- Are there tools & methods that have been found to be particularly useful for child participants?

Training, Supervision & Mentoring

- What do adult research staff need to know about partnering with children, and how can they be trained?
- What are appropriate roles for the researcher when inviting children to partner as producers of knowledge?
- What do partnering children need to know, and how can they be trained?
- How are developing children best supported throughout their participation?
- What is the role of mentoring?

Outputs of Participation

- Data reports to a variety of audiences
- Advocacy
- Informing policy changes
- Possible impacts on participants – education, careers, increased self-efficacy, improved outcomes

Throughout this workshop, participants' suggestions will be recorded and shared onscreen. During the closing 20 minutes, the facilitators will work to identify ideas that have some shared agreement, as well as highlighting points of disagreement that require further discussion. The results will be compiled and distributed to all participants and other interested persons within 14 days of the conference's end. We hope that this process will encourage an ongoing discussion, leading to concrete guidelines for children's partnering in research.

The use of multi-informant standardized tools to assess emotional and behavioral disorders in young people in residential child care

Prof. Carla González-García (University of Cantabria), Prof. Eduardo Martin (Universidad de la Laguna), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo)

INTRODUCTION: Young people in residential child care are a group at high risk of developing mental health problems (Segura, Pereda, Guilera, & Abad, 2016). The prevalence of mental health difficulties in this population has been highlighted as particularly high ranging from 40% to 88% (Burns et al., 2004; Garland et al., 2001; Jozefiak et al., 2016; McMillen et al., 2005). Despite this fact, a considerable number of youths do not receive treatment according to their emotional and behavioral needs (Burns et al., 2004; Gonzalez-García et al., 2017; Tarren-Sweeney, 2010). In view of these findings, several studies have pointed out the need to establish standardized protocols and tools to ensure that these cases are referred to treatment. The multi-informant ASEBA system (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) has been one the most used screening instruments. **OBJECTIVE:**This study aims to analyze the results of two of the instruments of this system (CBCL and YSR) in a sample of youths in residential care. According to this objective, we have examined the level of agreement between both instruments as well as the differences, paying particular attention to whether the same trends are seen between clinical (those who have been referred for mental health treatment) and non-clinical groups (those who are not receiving therapeutic treatment). **METHOD:** The sample was composed of 617 participants, 323 girls (52.4%) and 294 boys (47.6%) aged between 11 and 17 years old (M = 14.25; SD = 1.88) who had been living in residential child care for at least 3 months. The Youth Self Report was completed by each youth, while the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) was filled by their key social educators. A 2 × 2 ANOVA was performed, and the Pearson correlations between each subscale and broadband scale in the CBCL and YSR in the whole sample were also calculated. **RESULTS:**The results showed that the social educators scored higher in externalizing scales, whereas the young people reported more internalizing problems. However, the CBCL scores were higher than the YSR scores in the treatment group. The opposite trend was found in the non-treatment group, particularly in internalizing scales. **CONCLUSION:**The main conclusion of this study is the importance of having screening instruments with multiple informants.

The value and benefits of self-assessment in individual care planning

Mr. Murray Davies (The Viewpoint Organisation Pty Ltd, Australia), Mrs. Judith Garsed (Department of Communities, Western Australia)

Objectives

To share research evidence demonstrating that good assessments lead to good outcomes for children and young people

To present an example of an assessment framework which includes a self-assessment component

To demonstrate how the use of digital technologies: engage young people in the individual assessment process and display completed self-assessments for a conversation about needs

To show how self-assessments by young people can inform an assessment of their wellbeing and inform clinical judgements.

Method

Sharing key findings from research which demonstrate the value and benefits of actively involving young people in the assessment process.

Sharing a Needs Assessment Framework developed for use with children and young people in kinship, foster and residential care and an associated age-related self-assessment tool.

Demonstrating how this approach can be applied to other assessment models.

Demonstrate the process for engaging young people in the assessment of their wellbeing using digital technology and for using their self-assessment report to inform the assessment of needs and identify priorities for the young person

Drawing on the experience of over 6000 young people, demonstrating how self-assessments inform the assessment process and ensure that young people are committed and connected to individual their individual plan.

Results

Participants will have had an opportunity to consider the research evidence demonstrating the benefits of actively involving young people in the assessment process and how this leads to improved outcomes.

An assessment framework with a self-assessment component will have been presented and participants provided with an opportunity to consider this process in their own practice.

The benefits and the process for using digital technology to support self-assessments will have been demonstrated with examples from practice.

Conclusion

The value and benefits of using self-assessments in the assessment process will have been demonstrated. Participants will have had an opportunity to consider how this approach can be applied to their own assessment practice.

The value of qualitative comparative research on child well-being and vulnerability: Reflections upon the Children's Understandings of Well-being study

Prof. Christine Hunner-Kreisel (university of vechta), Dr. Tobia Fattore (Macquiare University of Sidney), Prof. Susann Fegter (University of Berlin)

Research obtaining children's perspectives on their well-being and vulnerability have contributed insights into how children define and experience different aspects of their well-being and how these aspects relate to their feelings of vulnerability. In our presentation we review some developments in qualitative research on children's well-being and vulnerability and discuss the potential contribution this research might make in respect to quantitative research in this field, which remains the orthodoxy, especially in child well-being research. We demonstrate this by discussing a multinational study of children's well-being named **Children's Understandings of Well-being study** (www.cuwb.org) that utilises a qualitative, participatory and context-sensitive methodology, providing findings from this study to demonstrate how qualitative research can inform the interpretation of quantitative data. We provide some empirical results from the CUWB study as a means of demonstrating the value of and challenges in undertaking context sensitive analysis of concepts of well-being and vulnerability and especially the insights obtained from cross-national and cross-border comparisons.

The wellbeing of care-experienced children (adopted and in out-of-home care) at school: identifying the challenges

Dr. Beatriz San Román (Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)), Dr. Chandra Kala Clemente-Martínez (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Dr. Federica De Cordova (University of Verona), Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen), Dr. Giulia Selmi (University of Verona), Dr. Chiara Sità (University of Verona)

Research has repeatedly shown that both children living in alternative care and those who were adopted not only have higher rates of school failure and dropout, but also their emotional wellbeing is often compromised in educational environments.

The Erasmus+ project “BRIGHTER FUTURE: Innovative tools for developing full potential after early adversity” aims to explore the processes involving these children (children in alternative care including unaccompanied migrant and adopted children) at school in order to better understand the main challenges and to develop strategies to build more inclusive school settings taking into account the different backgrounds, belongings and key relationships of these children. In this paper, we present its first results which analyze the narratives of the experiences of different stakeholders in four European countries (the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom), including foster and adoptive family associations, young people who were in care as children, and municipal child protection services.

The data combine those produced in two previous research (one in Italy with 69 in-depth interviews with children in family foster care and with their foster siblings and another one in Spain including 200 in-depth interviews to adoptive and foster families) with those produced during focus groups and joint trainings involving Universities, public bodies, and NGO in the four countries. The situation of children in alternative care and of the current school guidelines in each country have also been analysed through a local review of research and policies.

The analysis has shed light on the main difficulties experienced by school settings in including children coming from adverse experiences, such as lack of dialogue with the child and their entourage, and the failure to understand their needs and interpret their behaviours often prevent them from feeling safe and welcome in school. The findings suggest that teachers need specific training to understand the effects of early adversity, to rethink some traditional practices that assume all children have had a standard life trajectory, and to navigate between the need to respond to the curiosity of their peers and the boundaries of privacy.

Thirty years later: Exploring the life narratives of older adults who aged out of youth protection residential care services in Quebec Province.

Ms. Amanda Keller (McGill University)

This presentation will summarize a qualitative study that sheds light on the narratives of two individuals over the age of 50 who spent many years in residential youth protection. Research shows that individuals who age out of foster care struggle to adapt to adulthood (Casey Family Programs, 2003; Daining & DePanfilis, 2007; Koegel, Melamidt & Burnam, 1995; Rutman, Hubberstey & Feduni, 2007). Research also shows poorer outcomes in children who experience extended stays in residential versus traditional family-based foster care placements (Li et al., 2019). However, very little attention is paid to individuals over the age of 25, who spent many years in care. Unfortunately, this neglects to examine their actual adjustment to adulthood and how their lives evolve.
To address this gap in the literature, I recruited two adults to take part in an exploratory pilot study that employed retrospective narrative analysis to explore the life experiences of two adults age 50+ from Quebec who aged out of long-term residential care services. This research was conducted using a peer research approach (Lushie & Munro, 2014) and a social justice framework (Johnson & Parry, 2015). It explores subjective experiences in placement, their transitions to adulthood and parenthood, and their current life from a developmental and life course perspective. These stories of resilience provide insights into the evolution of youth protection practices, and how experiences of residential care can affect individuals across their lifespan.

To dream the impossible dream: Care leavers' challenges and barriers in pursuing their future expectations and goals

Dr. Yafit Sulimani-Aidan (Tel Aviv University)

Background: Young adults who leave care are at a crucial point in their lives. As they leave care, their expectations and aspirations as well as their planning for their future lives are especially important. Although earlier studies examined these vulnerable young people's challenges in transition to adulthood, they did not explore these challenges with regards to their own plans and expectations for their future. Therefore, this study aims to explore the challenges and barriers young adults who left care have in the attempt to realize their expectations and pursue their future aspirations and plans in relation to the theory of Emerging Adulthood (Arnett, 2000).

Methods: The sample included 25 young adults who were emancipated from the most common types of out-of-home placements in Israel (therapeutic residential care placements, youth villages and foster care). The selection criteria were: young adults in their early emerging adulthood (18-25) who spent at least two years in care from various primary occupation (e.g., army service, further studies, employed and unemployed) and different accommodations (e.g., living at home with their parents, living in supervised flats for care leavers in the community, or living alone/with roommates). Also, young adults from the most dominant groups (Israel, Former Soviet Union, Ethiopia). A semi-structured interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The young adults were asked to describe themselves (background, occupation, age, etc..), and were asked about their expectations for the future, plans, goals and their barriers and challenges in realizing them. Analysis included theoretical content analysis and quantitative analysis of the recurrence of themes that arose.

Results: Three major themes arose from the young adults' descriptions. The first theme was *weak and unsupportive social ties* (N= 23; 84%). This major theme concerned both sense of loneliness and social isolation and lack of support and guidance from adult figures. Also, within this theme, the young adults recognized the past and present influence of negative social relationships. The second theme concerned *the complex relationships with their biological families* (N = 18; 72%) and included three subthemes: the family's dependency on the young adults, lack of support and belief in the young adults' aspirations, and insufficient emotional and practical support in future decisions. The last major theme was the young adults' *poor personal capital* (N = 23; 92 %), which included the young adults' struggle with past and present economic hardship and educational difficulties. All of these challenges combined comprise a barrier to pursuing their future aspirations.

Conclusions and implications: The findings emphasize the connection between the challenges care leavers struggle with in their transition to independent living, their future outlook, and chosen paths in the context of emerging adulthood theory. Implications for practice suggest the importance of creating supportive follow up frameworks that allow care leavers to strengthen their social ties, build new positive and supportive relationships, and consult about future decisions, in order to increase their future possibilities and opportunities

Transformations in agency during the pathway from foster care to adulthood. Findings from After Reform School Study.

Ms. Janette Niiranen (University of Helsinki)

Chair: ?

Presenting author: Janette Niiranen

Words: 335

Objectives According to the previous research, those out-of-home care (OOHC) adolescents who are able to use their agentic capacities in constructive way might end up in a relatively healthy adulthood outcome. Reform school (RS) is a OOHC facility for adolescents with severe conduct problems. We set out to assess what kind of agency appear in life-stories among former RS adolescents, who have fared to a healthy condition in adulthood. Our aim was also to explore the turning points that enhance the more positive development. This study is a part of After Reform School Study (ARSS) project.

Methods The participants (N=13) were chosen from ARSS cohorts 2001 and 2006, defined by the placement year. The criteria for inclusion was an absence of both criminal record and severe mental health problems. The research material consists of semi-structured life-story interviews, which were analyzed based on a narrative constructivist framework.

Results Former RS adolescents with good adult outcomes used both disruptive and constructive agency during their life-paths. Disruptive agency was common in the life phase before the placement but diminished over the years, as the life story maturated. Constructive agency was more common during and after the RS placement. The turning points leading towards more prosocial attitudes varied in the life stories, but most often these were initiated by a relationship with a reliable adult in RS, a constructive activity or RS adolescents' own reflection.

Conclusions The results of the study suggest that RS adolescents' adult age prognosis might be better, if the care system was able to strengthen agency during the placement in reform school. In day-to-day care, this might be achievable, for example, by putting more effort on building stable, long-term relationships between RS adolescents and the adults. In addition, constructive activities should be promoted and self-reflection encouraged by positive reinforcement, in line with positive psychology guidelines. More, the role of resilience should be addressed in detail. Based on these results, clinical relevance and future studies are also discussed.

Transforming a residential educational program for young people: From faith based to data driven

Dr. Frank Ainsworth (James Cook University), Mr. Paul Mastronardi (Executive Director, Dunlea Centre, Engadine, NSW), Dr. Jonathan Huefner (Boytstown Instiute for Children and Family Studies)

This workshop shows how the youth perspective on organizational culture supports the implementation of the Teaching-Family Model (TFM) in a week-day residential program for young people with a history of non-school attendance as a result of school suspension, expulsion or refusal. Residential care settings should carefully evaluate how their program is organized to facilitate a safe and positive social climate using client-guided measures to evaluate the quality of residential care. A positive living climate establishes warm and nurturing caregiver-child relationship and must constantly be evaluated and recreated based on the perspective of residents and others.

The week-day program is voluntary and lasts for approximately 12 to 18 months. Young people attend from Monday at 9am through to Friday at 12pm and go home for the weekends. A young person entering the program will be placed in one of four units, living with a maximum of 7 other young people, and working with 5 staff members. The implementation of the TFM within this program involved a 6-year effort that transformed the agency through the use of an evidence-based intervention and better data-driven decision making. The transformative process required a fundamental change in organizational culture and involved several demanding steps.

Method

The program uses several instruments to collect information from the young people in care, including the social climate (Group Climate Instrument for Children – GCIC). This analysis focuses on social climate and GCIC data. The GCIC is a 14-item self-report survey that assesses youth perception of the living environment within the group homes. Item from this scale assess both positive and negative factors. An example of the positive items is “I feel that I am working on my goals here,” and an example of negative items is “There are too many kids here.” The questionnaire items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results and discussion

A 2 (pre versus post Intervention Change) x 4 (House) repeated measures MANOVA examined youth-reported changes in organizational culture over time. There was overall significance for both Intervention Change and House ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$ respectively). Univariate tests were significant for Intervention Change for two items: “I feel like I am working on my goals here” and “There are too many kids here.” For “I feel I am working on my goals here,” the pre intervention average was 3.68 (between “sometimes” and “agree”) and improved to a post intervention average 4.33 (well above “agree”). This is noteworthy because this item is the GCIC item most directly tied to impact of the program. Conversely, for “there are too many kids here,” the pre intervention average was 2.04 (virtually a “disagree”) and worsened to a post intervention average of 2.74 (approaching “sometimes”).

Univariate results for House were significant for four of the items: atmosphere of the group, honesty of the group, group rules, and ability to ask for help when needed. For these four items all the home averages were in the positive range, but one of the group homes was significantly better than the other three homes. This indicates that one of the homes has maintained a significantly more positive culture over time, independent of the intervention change.

This analysis is hampered by the limited number of youth who have been able to respond to the GCIC, therefore limiting the statistical power of the analysis. Nonetheless, these early results show the value of obtaining youth perspective data, are supportive of the TFM implementation, and provide actionable data for quality improvement efforts.

Transition to Adulthood from the Perspective of Care-Leavers – Findings from a longitudinal mixed methods study by SOS Children Village Germany

Dr. Kristin Teuber (SOS Children Village), Dr. Yvonne Kaiser (SOS Children Village)

SOS Children Village Germany has been conducting research on and with its care leavers since 2014. This paper will share some of the insights and give a brief overview over the challenges care leavers typically face, the most common risks inherent in the care leaving process and different ways of addressing them. Particular attention shall be paid to the interaction between the wider context in which leaving care is taking place and the young person with their resources, abilities and limitations.

The paper is based in a longitudinal study that alternates regular survey sweeps with in-depth interviews with individual care leavers, thus allowing for the generation of data that is both broad and deep. A particular quality of this study is that it gives SOS care leavers the opportunity to report from their respective personal point of view on the challenges they are currently facing in different areas of life such as relationships and social networks, school or vocational training and any expectations for the future they may have. They also look back and reflect on their personal experience with growing up in alternative care and on the support they received, that way feeding back to and evaluating the support mechanisms for care leavers in place.

As shall be seen leaving care is a very complex process with potentially far reaching consequences. Touching on a variety of issues both practical and emotional adequate preparation from an early age is key to successful coping. A careful balance of guidance by skilled caregivers and the young person's own involvement into decision making processes (participation) according to the specific needs of each adolescent can help to unlock the young person's potential and to develop essential resources for their personal life.

This paper argues that those young people who learned to cope well with developmental tasks or other challenges in life and who have stable relationships to either a group or a single individual clearly demonstrate higher degrees of well-being. This is tightly related to how they themselves evaluate their living situation and the confidence with which they are looking into the future.

In so doing the paper contributes to the debate about how caregivers in the German youth welfare system can best support care leavers on their way to adulthood and independent living. Transmitting the voices of adolescents concerned gives them an opportunity to input into the discussion in capacity of experts on their own lives and living situations and to contribute to shaping it on the basis of their own personal experiences.

Given that many aspects of leaving care are still uncharted terrain and reliable first-hand information is hard to come by the research this paper is based in offers an opportunity to inform both the training of practitioners and policy making on issues related to leaving care on the basis of solid evidence.

Transitioning from Care to Adulthood in Australia: 2009 to 2019

Dr. Joseph McDowall (CREATE Foundation and University of Queensland)

In 2009, the CREATE Foundation in Australia interviewed 196 young people who had aged out of care, asking about their experiences (a) when preparing to leave the child protection system, (b) while transitioning, and (c) in the years following as they attempted to achieve independence. Questions focused on all important life domains in a comprehensive analysis of the transitioning process. Since then, CREATE has conducted several projects that have given many young people with a care experience an opportunity to discuss how they have been supported when transitioning, and the challenges they faced largely due to inadequate preparation for independent living. However, no national review similar to that reported in 2009 has been undertaken in the last 10 years.

The project discussed here redresses this omission. In conjunction with CREATE's 2018 national survey of life in care as experienced by children in the system, young people who had left care during the last eight years also were given the chance to respond to similar questions asked of care leavers in 2009 to highlight any changes that may have occurred in recent times.

Across the country, 325 young people aged between 18 and 25 years responded to the survey. Overall, two thirds of participants were female, 22% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, while one third experienced some form of disability. The majority of respondents (42%) had been placed in foster homes, with almost one quarter having experienced residential care.

Comparison across the life domains showed that results on most measures were similar for both cohorts. For example, still only around one third (36%) were aware of having a transition plan. Half chose to remain living with their carer on turning 18, while 29% were living with family members (mostly siblings) at the time of interview. Of concern were the 17% who were homeless immediately after transitioning, and the 30% who became homeless in their first year of independence. A large proportion (46%) still were totally dependent on welfare payments (for unemployment or study support); 30% had not been able to find any regular, paid employment. Many (40%) had weekly contact with siblings, compared with 28% who saw their birth mother as often . Half had no contact with fathers.

However, six measures showed differences over the ten years: five were positive, one negative. While there were no differences in the number of care leavers having a plan for their future, currently more of those with a plan had been involved in its development. In 2019, more care leavers had completed Year 12 (57% vs. 35%). Fewer respondents found it difficult to obtain accommodation; more care leavers were working part-time, and more of the sample were engaged in study. Unfortunately, the number of care leavers involved with youth justice has increased.

Given the consistently poor outcomes achieved by care leavers in Australia and globally, it would seem to be time to rethink the notion of "leaving care." As a construct, its negative implications are overwhelming. From a legal position, statutory orders expire at age 18 years, but this need not impact on the care provided, which should continue as long as needed (as occurs in the general population). Changing our thinking and associated terminology would remove the threat of a necessary forced "transition" and the anxiety and uncertainty consequently generated (either through early discussions about leaving, or no discussions at all until it happens). This would go a long way to achieving stability for these young people, and enable them to realise their aspirations in their own timeframe.

Transitioning from foster care to college: Youth perspectives on transportation

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Earning a college degree has lasting benefits for those who accomplish this goal. College graduates have healthier lifestyles, are more active citizens, have more involvement in their children's activities, and lower rates of unemployment. A college education increases the chance that adults will move up the socioeconomic ladder and reduces the chance that adults will rely on public assistance (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). According to Abel and Deitz (2014), over the past four decades, those with a bachelor's degree have tended to earn 56% more than high school graduates while those with an associate's degree have tended to earn 21% more than high school graduates. Similar to other populations, the benefits of college completion are clear for former foster youth. Former foster youth who complete a college education report higher employment rates and annual earnings than those who do not complete college (Okpych & Courtney, 2014).

Although many former foster youth aspire to attend college (84%), less than 3% graduate with a 4 year degree (Courtney et al., 2011; National Working Group on Foster Care, 2014). When attempting to transition to college, many of these youth face daunting obstacles including, navigating the college application process, a lack of preparation for

independent living, a lack of supportive adults, insufficient financial resources and inadequate emotional support to cope with the academic demands and social stresses related to college life (Batsche et al., 2014; Day, et al., 2012; Gillum, et al., 2016; Salazar, 2012). Another area that has received very little attention in the literature is the transportation needs of youth. Access to transportation is critical to youth's ability to transition to college. Transportation is needed to access health care services, mental health services, and employment while in college. As youth transition to college, they are often not prepared to navigate the challenges of transportation. In recent years, there has been significant growth in campus support programs that assist former foster youth as they transition to postsecondary institutions (Geiger & Beltran, 2017b; Geiger, et al., 2016). However, there is no clear model for these programs in terms of how they are funded, developed, managed, or evaluated (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). The literature is even more limited when assessing pre-college programs for former foster youth. The National Social Work Enrichment Program (NSEP), is one pre-college strategy used to address the post-secondary education needs of older foster youth in the state of Alabama. Partnering with the Department of Human Resources to identify older foster youth, high school juniors and seniors, to participate in the program, NSEP provides a 6-week pre-college campus experience. Foster youth live in residence halls, eat in university dining facilities, access on-campus recreational facilities, and attend various workshops in the school of social work classrooms. Social work students are also hired to serve as mentors and program assistants. The program has as its primary goals that youth will graduate high school and enroll in college. NSEP has four primary program components: (1) college readiness skill development, (2) employment skill development, (3) leadership skill development, and (4) healthy relationship skill development (Jackson, Colvin, & Bullock, 2019).

This presentation will discuss and share findings from an exploratory qualitative research study on the transportation needs of NSEP program participants. Data was gathered through two focus groups held with 2019 summer program participants. The presentation will discuss how the youth perspective can shape future transportation policy and the need for future research on transportation and transition age foster youth.

Transitioning from Foster Care to Emerging Adulthood: Exploring Support and Wellbeing Among Transgender/Gender Expansive Youth of Color

Dr. June Paul (Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York)

Former foster youth are often uniquely disenfranchised, as many suffer from a lack of support (e.g., financial, informational, emotional) resulting from their involvement in foster care. Although all youth who exit foster care as adults may have difficulty accessing the support they need to become healthy-functioning adults, these issues may be exacerbated for transgender/gender expansive (T/GE) youth of color who often face added challenges associated with their race/ethnicity and gender minority statuses.

Despite these risks, research focused on this multiply marginalized population is extremely limited. To begin to address this gap, this longitudinal study explored the supportive relationships and health and wellbeing experiences of a small cohort of T/GE youth of color as they journeyed from the foster care system to early adulthood. Our aim was to develop a deeper understanding of how this group of young people are faring 12-24 months post exit from foster care.

Participants were recruited statewide from transitional living programs in a Midwestern state in the United States using an iterative sampling process. Data was gathered over a period of 24 months using a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, alongside observations, with 5 T/GE youth of color, aged 19-21, that had recently exited the foster care system as young adults. A combination of qualitative structural and thematic narrative analysis was used to analyze the data.

T/GE youth of color experienced a variety of challenges when trying to access important resources and services such as housing, education and employment opportunities, and gender-affirming medical care. Youth also reported struggles with navigating threats to their safety/wellbeing, the identity development process (particularly in terms of their race/ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity), and relationships with friends, family, and service providers. Results highlight the importance of using an intersectional lens to identify and address biases that currently exist in the child welfare system. Recommendations for improving child welfare policy, practice and research are provided.

Transmedia experiences and tools in the childhood protection field: A systematic literature review

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Background:
In the last years has emerged new way of media communication called transmedia. This type of communication is characterized by media convergence and an active production role of all users (Jenkins, 2006). Several fields have used this new way of communication to enhance its methods and made them more effective, collaborative and engaging. We have seen how cinematography, marketing, journalism, formal education and many more ambits have used this new media communication concept which mixes media convergence and the participatory culture to update their effectiveness. Consequently, we considered how it can improve the different procedures in the sphere of childhood protection system. This review is framed in a broader R&D project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economics and Competitivity (RTI2018-099305-B-C21) which seeks to promote the family participation in the children welfare system procedures. Therefore, the objective of this systematic literature review, was to analyze the application of this new way of communicating in the educational procedures that occur during the child fostering and following family reunification.

Method:
In order to meet the aim of the research, this systematic review followed the PRISMA (Urrútia & Bonfill, 2010) model with some additions from Torraco directions (2005). We formulated a series of questions that broke down our objective, as a means to set several keywords that guided our search. Following, we filtered the articles prompted by the engines by content analysis of article's tittle and abstract in accordance with the articulated questions. This systematic literature review was based on a research in three databases: Scoopus, ERIC and Web of Knowledge. After 40 searches, in which a sum of 644 results arose, a systematic analysis of the results led us to select 115 articles, between 2010 and 2020, for meeting the inclusion criteria. Subsequently, we proceeded to elaborate a categories system to sort and deeply analyze the content of these publications.

Results:
The content analysis produced various results. The review showed a handful of transmedia tools and applications in the education field, which allowed for a better learning of all types of students (Kalogeras, 2016; McCarthy et al., 2018; Scolari et al., 2018). In addition, we found some experiences and resources used in this non-formal education field. The results also bring up different aims and ways in which transmedia changes education (González-Martínez et al., 2019). Moreover, also several tools to produce transmedia experiences, projects or resources were found. Yet, few significative research was found regarding the specific field of children welfare.

Conclusions:
Regarding the childhood protection ambit few materials and experiences were found. Since few academic research has been done about transmedia education usage in this field, research from other fields had to be considered in order to establish parallelisms and see what strategies, tools, experiences and resources can be also implemented in the childhood protection system. Thus, further research should be done regarding the usage of transmedia strategies and resources in the children protection field, since this application has a huge potential for improving and updating the training, communication and participation of those involved in the processes of the childhood protection system.

Transnational Families and Transnational Care – new Challenges for Child and Youth Care Services

Prof. Stefan Koengeter (University of Applied Sciences St.Gallen), Prof. Sahar Makhamreh (Al-Balqa' Applied University, Amman (BAU)), Dr. Thomas Meysen (SOCLES International Centre for Socio-Legal Studies), Mrs. Bettina Diwersy (Landesamt für Soziales im Saarland)

Transnational studies shed new lights on migration processes: They emphasize the ongoing interconnections of people «across the borders of nation-states, in contexts in which the state shapes but does not contain such linkages» (Glick Schiller/Levitt 2006). From such a theoretical lens, migration and related phenomenon, such as diversity, integration, discrimination, are understood from the perspective of the mobile population itself and not any longer from the sending or receiving countries. These transnational approaches help to better understand contemporary families and family networks which are often located in more than one national context. They underline the importance of significant others living abroad, the ongoing loyalty to family members within and across national boundaries, new mixtures of cultural practices, the meaning of different legal regulations, multilingualism, etc. Transnational ways of belonging (referring to identity practices) and transnational ways of being (referring to cross-border activities) are constitutive for their family and part of their regular everyday practices.

The new transnational normality, however, is hardly considered in child and youth care. This is due to a persisting "methodological nationalism", a term which points out that the perception and the understanding of everyday lives by professionals as well as academics are often limited to national boundaries. This can also limit the perspective of professionals when it comes to child and youth care services with transnational families. Particularly in situation of family crises, e.g. divorce, poverty, unemployment, child endangerment, these transnational linkages become a major challenge for professionals as they are supposed to take these transnational ways of being and belonging into account. Furthermore, they often must collaborate with professionals who are involved in other welfare regimes and child and youth care systems.

The symposium aims at discussing child and youth care services with transnational families from the perspective of these families as well as from the perspective of professionals dealing with these transborder activities. It brings together three contributions which she light on a broad array of new challenges for professionals in child and youth care services. Contributors base their talks on international, comparative research, on transnational research and practice projects, as well as research projects on refugee families.

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Trauma sensitive care practices: preliminary results from a sample of Residential Care Homes in Portugal

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Summary
Despite the global pressure for the deinstitutionalization of children in care across Europe, and recent changes in national legislation, Portugal remains a country with very high prevalence (86,9%) of residential care amongst at risk children (ISS- IP, 2020). These children have been exposed to multiple traumatic events that can disrupt their emotional, relational and psychological development. In this context, the quality of welfare environments, namely residential care Homes, depends on professional competences of front line residential care workers thus they play a critical role to effectively respond to this children and youth needs. Trauma-sensitive, or trauma-informed practices aim to increase awareness of the effects of traumatic events in children and youth development, in order to guarantee the best care for these vulnerable children, providing a safe and healthy environment, with consequences also in mental health of residential care workers.

Objective: The project aims to evaluate de quality of residential care environments in Portugal, thought the lens of trauma sensitive practices. This evaluation is expected to raise a multilevel organizational change improving consistency and cohesive practices in cross- service collaboration.

Method: After informed consent, residential care workers and leaderships are asked to complete an online socio-demographical inquiry, data about residential care home, and the QACST-SPIJ- Questionário de Avaliação dos Cuidados Sensíveis ao Trauma – Serviços de Proteção Infância e Juventude (Veiga, Rocha, Negrão e Santa Roza, 2020)- [Trauma Sensitive Care Evaluation Questionnaire for Welfare System]. The 76 question questionnaire addresses critical areas for trauma sensitive care in welfare system that encompasses institutional mission and values, recruitment and workforce development, availability and guidelines for screening, assessment and trauma focused intervention, community network services.

Results: Data collection is still ongoing. The description of the residential care homes according these key areas and the information gathered through the open questions included in the questionnaire, will enable to identify a profile of strengths and weaknesses, and consequently to improve organizational change process addressing a trauma sensitive care approach. Building professional's capacities, this change process will involve service managers, family and professional careers.

Discussion and implications: The epidemiology of developmental trauma brings new concerns in the public health domain and demands a greater accessibility to trauma sensitive care from child and youth service´s providers. Raising awareness about the importance of trauma sensitive care will reduce the risk of re-victimization and other negative outcomes in vulnerable children and youths, contributing to protect children´s rights.

Key words: trauma informed practices, trauma sensitive care, welfare system, residential care workers

Trauma- and stressor- related difficulties in youth placed in out-of-home care: Validity, associations and measurement

Prof. Michael Tarren-Sweeney (University of Canterbury), Dr. Stine Lehmann (University of Bergen, Department of psychology), Dr. Astrid Seim (NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology), Dr. Marc Noom (Universiteit van Amsterdam)

Children and young people placed in out-of-home care are a particularly vulnerable group who have usually experienced childhood adversities and have a high prevalence of mental disorders. This symposium will explore the validity, relations and measurement of trauma- and stressor- related difficulties in youth placed out of home.

The first two presentations in this symposium aim to give an overview of the validity and relations of trauma- and stressor- related difficulties in youth placed out of home. In the first presentation, Stine Lehmann will address exposure to potentially traumatic events (PTEs) among 303 foster youth, and associations with DSM-5 trauma- and stressor related symptoms. She will share her research findings about the prevalence of PTEs and poly-victimization in Norwegian foster youth. She will also discuss the links between PTEs and mental disorders among youth in foster care, wherein she focuses on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), reactive attachment disorder (RAD) and disinhibited social engagement disorder (DSED). In the second presentation, Astrid Seim will present a study on the validity of RAD and DSED among 381 adolescents in residential youth care in Norway. The goal of her study was to find out whether symptoms of RAD and DSED were better conceptualized as other psychiatric disorders. Construct validity of RAD and DSED, including structural and discriminant validity, were investigated using confirmatory factor analysis and latent profile analyses. The third and fourth presentation in this symposium address measurement issues related to trauma and stressor related difficulties. The third presentation focuses on screening of trauma and attachment related difficulties and the fourth presentation focuses on screening and assessment of insecure attachment relationships. In the third presentation, Michael Tarren-Sweeney

will present a mental health screening protocol for children and adolescents in care. Her study compared the screening properties of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Brief Assessment Checklist (BAC) among three national studies (Australia, N = 347; the Netherlands, N = 219; England: 770). The BAC is 20-item measure specifically designed for children in care, and screen for attachment- and trauma- related mental health difficulties. The fourth presentation, given by Marc Noom, presents a study testing the validity and reliability of the newly developed 48-item Attachment Relationship Inventory – Caregiver Perception 2-5 years (ARI-CP 2-5) among 446 caregivers. The ARI-CP 2-5 is developed to be used as a research tool but also for clinical practice as part of the assessment of the quality of attachment relationships and the screening of insecure attachment relationships.

The four speakers will reflect on the validity and relations of trauma- and stressor- related difficulties in children and youth placed in out-of-home care as well as what actions could be taken to improve the screening and assessment of trauma and stressor related difficulties and behaviors. These studies intend to contribute to knowledge by developing research that can support country level policy decisions and improve practice.

Trauma- and stressor- related difficulties in youth placed in out-of-home care: Validity, associations and measurement - Development and Validation of the Attachment Relationship Inventory – Caregiver Perception 2-5 years (ARI-CP 2-5)

Dr. Anouk Spruit (Senior Researcher Basic Trust), Dr. Cristina Colonnesi (Assistant professor, Department of Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam), Dr. Inge Wissink (Assistant professor, Department of Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam), Ms. Renée Uittenbogaard (Psychotherapist, Director Basic Trust), Prof. Geert Jan Stams (Professor, Department of Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam), Dr. Marc Noom (Assistant professor, Department of Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam)

Chair: prof. Michael Tarren-Sweeney.

Aim. There is a lack of instruments assessing child-caregiver attachment relationships in early childhood. Therefore, the 48-item Attachment Relationship Inventory – Caregiver Perception 2-5 years (ARI-CP 2-5) was developed. The aim of the present study was to examine the psychometric properties of this new instrument.

Method. Survey data of 446 caregivers of 2-5-year-old children were collected, and a subsample of 83 caregivers participated in an observation study.

Results. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed a four-factor structure of secure, avoidant, ambivalent, and disorganized attachment relationship. Indications of configural, metric, and scalar invariance were found for caregivers' and children's sex, children's age, and population (clinical vs. general population). The four scales showed sufficient internal consistency and significant associations with children's psychopathology, caregivers' general attachment representations, caregivers' mindmindedness, and population type. Moreover, preliminary evidence for convergent validity with observational attachment measures was found.

Conclusion. It is concluded that the ARI-CP 2-5 is a valid instrument that can be used as part of the screening and assessment of insecure attachment relationships. This instrument can be used both in practice and in research.

Trauma- and stressor- related difficulties in youth placed in out-of-home care: Validity, associations and measurement -Potentially traumatic events in foster youth, and association with DSM-5 trauma- and stressor related symptoms

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Session Chair: Michael Tarren-Sweeney

Background

Exposure to childhood adversity has been estimated to account for 45 % of mental disorders in childhood, hence is thought to be the single greatest predictor of mental health problems in children. Children and young people placed in foster care are a particularly vulnerable group who have usually experienced abuse and neglect and have a high prevalence of mental disorders. In DSM 5, three disorders are explicitly related to stress and trauma: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) and Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder (DSED). How these disorders relate to each other and to different types of traumatic events is unclear.

Objective

We examined 1. Prevalence of Potentially Traumatic Events (PTEs) and poly-victimization for youths in foster care. 2. Associations between single/multiple PTEs and PTSD, DSED, and the two symptom-clusters that constitute RAD: Failure to seek/accept comfort (RAD A), and Low social-emotional responsiveness/ emotion dysregulation (RAD B).

Participants, setting and methods

Foster youth 11–17 years (N = 303) in Norway completed The Child and Adolescent Trauma Screen (CATS). The CATS is a questionnaire with two parts. Part 1 assess 15 different forms of PTEs young people may experience both outside of and within a family context. Part 2 of the CATS comprises 20 items covering symptoms of PTSD and is based on the DSM-5 criteria. Foster parents completed the RAD and DSED Assessment (RADA) interview. The RADA is an assessment tool compatible with the DSM-5 criteria for symptoms of RAD and DSED.

Results

Foster youth reported experiencing, on average, 3.44 PTEs each (range 0–15, SD 3.33). Overall, 52.9 % of the youth reported PTSD symptoms at or above the clinical cut off score of 15, signifying “Moderate trauma related stress” to “likely PTSD”. The PTE sum score was associated with the latent factors PTSD ($r = .66$, $p < 0.001$), RAD cluster B symptoms (Low social-emotional responsiveness / emotion dysregulation, $r = .28$, $p < 0.001$) and DSED ($r = .11$, $p = 0.046$), but not with RAD cluster A symptoms (Failure to seek/accept comfort).

Conclusions

Our findings indicate that young people in foster care are exposed to multiple types of interpersonal traumas and that these experiences increases the risk of both well-established PTSD-symptoms and symptoms of Low social-emotional responsiveness/emotional dysregulation as defined by RAD criteria B in DSM-5. Children, adolescents or adults with a history of child maltreatment need careful assessments that consider relationship-focused problems as well as trauma-related problems. More research is needed about the causes and mechanisms of the development of RAD and DSED.

Trauma- and stressor- related difficulties in youth placed in out-of-home care: Validity, associations and measurement – Validity of reactive attachment disorder and disinhibited social engagement disorder in adolescence

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Session chair: Michael Tarren-Sweeney

Objectives: Reactive attachment disorder (RAD) and disinhibited social engagement disorder (DSED) are valid disorders in young children, but controversy remains to their validity in adolescence. An unresolved question has been whether RAD and DSED symptoms in adolescence are better conceptualized as other psychiatric disorders. Therefore, we studied the construct validity of RAD and DSED in adolescence, including structural and discriminant validity. Additionally, as the epidemiological knowledge about RAD and DSED in adolescence is scarce, we studied the prevalence of RAD and DSED among adolescents living in residential youth care (RYC), where in-family placements have failed.

Method: All adolescents (*N*=381; 67% consent; 12–20 years old) living in Norwegian RYC were interviewed to determine the symptoms and diagnosis of RAD, DSED and other common psychiatric disorders using the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Assessment (CAPA). The frequency of RAD and DSED symptoms, and prevalence rates of RAD and DSED disorders were calculated. The construct validity of RAD and DSED, including structural and discriminant validity, was investigated using confirmatory factor analysis and latent profile analysis. The distinction to symptoms of the following disorders was investigated: major depressive disorder, dysthymia, generalized anxiety disorder, panic attacks, other anxiety disorders, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, and autism spectrum disorder.

Results: The frequency of individual RAD symptoms ranged from 2.4% to 34.6%, and the frequency of DSED symptoms ranged from 3.5% to 11.1%. In all, 16.3% (95% CI 12.6%–20.0%; *n*=62) fulfilled the criteria for either RAD or DSED, with 8.7% having RAD (95% CI 6.0%–11.0%; *n*=33), 8.1% having DSED (95%CI 5.4%–10.9%; *n*=31) and 0.5% (*n*=2) having both disorders. Symptoms of RAD and DSED defined two distinct latent groups in a profile analysis. Two-factor models distinguishing between symptoms of RAD and DSED and differentiating each of these from the symptoms of the other psychiatric disorders revealed better fit than one-factor models.

Conclusions: Symptoms of RAD and DSED constitute two distinct latent constructs and are not accounted for by other common psychiatric disorders in adolescence. RAD and DSED are not uncommon among adolescents in RYC. To alleviate individual suffering and societal costs and because RAD and DSED are preventable and may imply treatment approaches not otherwise offered (such as specialized interventions with the caregiver, aiming to enhance caregiver sensitivity, emotional availability and commitment to the child) and without which there is increased risk of placement breakdown, it is pertinent that RAD and DSED in both childhood and adolescence be acknowledged. Moreover, the relatively high prevalence rates of RAD and DSED among adolescents in RYC warrant that all RYC personnel receive appropriate training and education enabling them to understand the underlying reasons for the residents’ behaviours and to provide developmentally supportive relational experiences. Like other caregivers, the RYC personnel may need specialized guidance to help them enhance and

maintain their sensitivity and emotional availability when interacting with the residents over time, as RAD and DSED behaviour may be relationally challenging and easily provoke negative responses from the caregivers, further aggravating rather than ameliorating the underlying struggles of the child. Further, as there is a risk of both under- and over-diagnosis of RAD and DSED, both which may result in missed treatment, all high-risk children and adolescents, such as individuals living in RYC, should have easy access to high-quality psychiatric assessment and care.

Trauma-Informed Practice and Research in a Residential Program

Dr. Patrick Tyler (Boys Town Child and Family Translational Research Center)

The Boys Town Child and Family Translational Research Center has conducted a series of applied research studies examining the impact of trauma on youth emotional and behavioral problems, how trauma impacts responsiveness to treatment, and translation of research findings to the most effective practices for youth with histories of trauma.

Specific trauma-informed program components that will be discussed include staff training, trauma screening and assessment, and program strategies that help youth and families.

This work has included the development and testing of a self-report screening tool called the Brief Trauma Symptom Screen for Youth ^{SM} (BTSSY) which focuses on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. The BTSSY is used to quickly detect issues related to traumatic exposure in youth so staff can identify youth who need further trauma-related assessment.

A neuro-imaging study using functional MRI looked at the relationship between different types of childhood maltreatment and brain responses was also conducted. Researchers found response differences based on the type of childhood maltreatment. Physical abuse was related to heightened response to threat, and sexual abuse was related to disruptions in emotional responding. These results are used to understand the impact maltreatment has on child brain development and identify specific approaches to increase treatment effectiveness.

Additionally, research was conducted to determine if trauma exposure, symptoms, and the clinical impression (used to develop youth service plans) were related to youth response to services. Results found that trauma symptoms were related to emotional problems and self-injurious incidents in youth. Girls were also more likely to report higher rates of trauma symptoms, emotional problems and display self-injurious behavior. Overall, youth in low and high trauma groups and boys and girls made progress in the program at similar rates based on decreases in disruptive and self-injurious behaviors and caregiver reports of youth conduct problems. However, youth who were deemed by staff to have lower levels of trauma showed greater decreases in emotional problems. These results have also helped staff understand the relationship between trauma and youth service needs.

Finally, research was conducted to identify strategies (e.g., problem-solving skills training) that may help youth with high levels of trauma make greater improvements.

This research has allowed the program to use a trauma-informed approach that takes past youth trauma exposure into account in order to prevent further trauma. Participants will receive information on how Boys Town conducts ongoing research to better understand: (1) the impact trauma has on youth and families, (2) how youth and families respond to trauma-informed services, and (3) how to develop strategies that can aid in recovery from trauma exposure. This research is translated into practice so that direct care staff better understand and provide appropriate services to youth and families that have experienced traumatic events.

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors' Perspectives on their Transnational Family Life and the Role of Social Work

Ms. Franziska Anna Seidel (University of Kassel)

Background: Transnational family life due to the separation from parents is part of unaccompanied refugee minors' (URMs) everyday lives. This is also true for URMs residing in Germany who have been taken into custody by Social Services due to the absence of primary caregivers. Even though the number of URMs arriving in Germany is declining in comparison to previous years, social workers are still challenged to provide each child with the required care based on the child's best interest. This includes supporting children in their individual development as well as concerning the integration process in Germany.

Previous research shows that URMs generally face various stress factors whereby the physical absence and insecurity about parents' wellbeing have been identified as one crucial concern. However, more research is needed to understand in what way exactly the physical absence of parents influences URMs, how URMs cope with the separation, and how they, when possible, maintain contact with their family members across distances. Besides, research is missing on how social workers support URMs concerning their transnational family lives and in what way parents abroad are included in social work interventions in Germany.

Study Purpose: This paper aims to present current knowledge on URMs' transnational family lives as well as social work perspectives on this issue. This includes a portrayal of the ethical and legal mandate for social workers, an overview of the state of research in this field as well as a presentation of preliminary findings based on qualitative interviews.

Method: Presentation findings are based on a systematic literature review as well as preliminary findings of a qualitative study. The systematic literature review captured studies from social work research, psychological case studies, and interdisciplinary research on transnational families. The qualitative study aims to provide in-depth knowledge on URM's perceptions of their transnational family lives as well as social work perspectives and is based on interviews with URMs and social workers. Interviews followed an interview guide, were audio-recorded, and lasted between 30-90 minutes. Data were transcribed and analyzed using Grounded Theory. For this presentation, a special focus lies on selected interviews with URMs to highlight childrens' perspectives in this context.

Results: Apart from URMs being challenged to deal with the regular developmental tasks of adolescence, preliminary findings highlight the crucial importance of the family for URMs regardless if contact is maintained or the location of family members is unknown. Even though parents are physically not present, children state that their family's wellbeing is the most important concern and often has an impact on their wellbeing. Some URMs feel guilty and tend to not talk to their parents about their social problems whereas others have permanent contact across distance. In some cases, URMs feel that they have to take over the responsibility for their parents or siblings left behind in countries of origin or transit countries. Especially in the context of planning a family reunification, URMs tend to assist their parents in organizational matters and act as translators between German authorities, social workers, and parents.

Conclusion: Results point to the need of supporting URMs in dealing with the separation from their family members. Social workers should be aware of transnational components in URMs' daily life and need to provide room for children to express their concerns. URMs should be supported in maintaining family contact if this is in the children's best interest. This could also include engaging in transnational social work practices with parents abroad to decrease the responsibility that URMs feel they have for their parents.

Understanding children's perspectives about relationships with staff in group care: A catalyst for change

Dr. Charles Izzo (Cornell University, Residential Childcare Project)

For children living in group care, relationships with the adults in their daily lives are critical components of their daily experience in the therapeutic milieu. Theory and research regarding effective group care practice need to account for the important role that these relationships play in children's [recovery], and better assessments are needed to accurately represent children's perspectives in this regard. Such information can help to guide agency and system-wide efforts to improve programming.

Five related projects will be described, each illustrating a systematic effort to promote greater understanding of children's perspectives in order to inform improvements in group care practice. Anglin will discuss his foundational research in British Columbia emphasizing how data from child interviews contributed to key aspects of this theory, such as "pain-based behavior" and the quest for "normality." He will outline his subsequent partnership with Cornell University that led to development of the CARE Program model and his current action research project in Australia. Izzo will describe a measure to assess child perceptions about their relationships with group home staff, including data from its use in a large evaluation study and data feedback tools used to guide reflective discussion with staff.

Galle will describe her use of the measure at her own agency where reflective discussions about the data stimulated a series of innovative practice changes. McCabe will present a qualitative study in which children described characteristics of their favorite staff. She will discuss its practical implications for cultivating a direct-care workforce that can engage effectively with children. Finally, Marin will discuss efforts at regional and national levels to promote greater understanding of youth perspectives within the context of a nation-wide organization in Australia. She will highlight issues of organizational capacity and the need to insure safety for children and staff.

Understanding children's perspectives about relationships with staff in group care: A catalyst for change - A measure to systematically assess child perception of relationship quality in group care: Research and practice applications

Dr. Charles Izzo (Cornell University, Residential Child Care Project), Dr. Elliott G. Smith (Cornell University, Residential Child Care Project)

The nature of the relationships between children and adults is among the most critical aspects of a child's experience in group care. Assessing relationships in the group care environment is challenging for a host of reasons, including the need to protect children's confidentiality and concerns about their ability to understand questions and respond candidly. Existing measures are often narrow in scope, address only a single relationship, use language that is too complex, and do not reflect the realities of the group care environment. As a result, assessment data may be of limited value for judging the quality of children's daily experience and cannot serve as a reliable guide for action.

The current presentation will describe a new measure designed specifically for use in therapeutic residential care to assess children's perspectives about their day-to-day relationships and interactions with direct care staff. The presentation will focus on describing (1) the measure's content and the multi-method process used to develop and refine the survey items, (2) research findings that demonstrate the measure's psychometric properties and results of its recent use in a large-scale evaluation of the CARE program model, and (3) tools used to summarize data and guide staff discussion regarding quality improvement.

The presentation will first describe the Youth Perceptions of Relationship Quality (YPRQ) measure, which was developed for the dual purposes of conducting scientific research and for offering feedback to agency administrators to inform their program improvement efforts. Respondents read scenarios of typical situations encountered in group care settings and answer questions specific to those situational contexts. Review of scientific literature helped to identify key aspects of children's care experience that promote healthy development and recovery while in care (e.g., sensitivity/responsiveness, autonomy support, trauma-sensitivity, etc). Focus groups with children living in group homes identified aspects of the daily care experience that they considered important and to find ways to word survey items that were relatable to a wide range of children. Lastly, it involved efforts to represent key aspects of the Children and Residential Experiences (CARE) program model, given the measure's intended use as a feedback tool for agencies to identify areas of focus as they implement CARE. Protocols to increase participation and reduce threats to confidentiality will be discussed.

Next, we will describe psychometric information about the measure and results of its use in a large program evaluation. Data were gathered with over 700 children living in group care as part of a multi-site evaluation of the CARE program model across 13 agencies. Overall scores showed a symmetric distribution located at the center of the 5-point Likert scale. Internal consistency among items was high, with an alpha coefficient=.93. We concurrently administered the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA), modified for the group care context, and found that it correlated highly with the YPRQ score ($r = .84$, $p < .0001$), providing a good indicator of construct validity. As expected, YPRQ scores were highly consistent among children clustered with cottages (ICC=.32), and to a lesser extent among those clustered within agencies (ICC=.05). On average, agencies' YPRQ scores improved significantly over the 3-year implementation period.

Finally, we will present sample reports to show how data are summarized for agency feedback during CARE implementation. Items are grouped conceptually into seven content areas, that together form the basis for the rubric that guides later discussion and programming. The report format allows agencies to make several comparisons (e.g., over time, between units, content areas).

Understanding children's perspectives about relationships with staff in group care: A catalyst for change - Developing Theory and Translating Theory into Practice Grounded in Young People's Perspectives

Prof. James Anglin (University of Victoria)

This presentation will provide the anchor point for the symposium as a whole. It will describe the foundational research that was grounded in the perceptions and experiences of young people in 10 residential settings in British Columbia (*Pain, Normality and the Struggle for Congruence*: *Reinterpreting Residential Care for Children and Youth*, Anglin, Routledge, 2002). Semi-structured interviews and informal conversations and observations of young people and staff members in group care agencies across the province were undertaken to "understand group home life and work with children … in order to construct a framework for practice". Some of the central findings from this research, with an emphasis on how data from child interviews contributed to the identification and understanding of key aspects of this theory, such as "pain-based behavior", the "flow of congruence" and the quest for "normality" will be presented.

Following this overview, the development of the subsequent partnership with colleagues at Cornell University and the evolution of the Cornell CARE Program model that resulted, will be outlined briefly as an example of creating theory and the translation of the theory into practice across agencies, nations and cultures. A current related action research project, ARCARE (Action Research with Children and Residential Experiences), will be introduced. This research project is in the early stages and is being undertaken in the Northern Territory of Australia (especially Darwin and Alice Springs) involving a national agency providing residential care and the active participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, families, youth, leaders and aboriginal-controlled agencies. The project offers an example of cross-cultural learning through an inclusive process of program implementation and practice enhancement.

Understanding children's perspectives about relationships with staff in group care: A catalyst for change - Exploration of the youth-adult relationship in residential care: Small glimpses from a large sample of youth

Dr. Lisa McCabe (Cornell University, Residential Childcare Project), Dr. Charles Izzo (Cornell University, Residential Childcare Project)

Objectives

The youth-adult relationship is commonly recognized as a key mechanism through which youth-oriented services operate, and the quality of that relationship has been described as 'the active ingredient on which effectiveness of all other program elements depend' (Li & Julian, 2012, p. 163). The current study adds to our understanding of this relationship by examining how youth living in residential care view the adult characteristics and interaction styles most likely to facilitate effective youth-adult relationships.

Methods

Data for this study were collected as part of a larger evaluation being conducted to test the efficacy of the CARE program. Youth living in a residential program were invited to respond to an open-ended, written survey question asking them to describe the qualities they like about their favorite youth care worker. A total of 738 youth from across 16 agencies participated. The youth included males (53.6%) and females (46.4%), ranged in age from 8 to 21 (mean age=14.3), were mostly Caucasian (68.8%) or African-American (20.6%), and had resided at the agency between 15 and 2,777 days (median=159 days).

Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a total of 18 categories were developed and coded as "present" or "absent" by a team of coders. Reliability across coders was acceptably high for most categories (Kappas ranged from .45 to .91; Fleiss, 1981).

Multiple regression was used to test whether youth endorsement of any category was related to age or length of stay. Chi-square tests were used to examine whether endorsing a given category was related to gender.

Results

Youth survey responses described a range of staff qualities and characteristics that make them their favorite. A total of 18 categories were derived, including five clusters of categories, and two independent categories. The 'Engaged' cluster comprised six categories (Listens, Meets Emotional Needs, Helps Resolve Problems, Meets Tangible Needs, Available, Non-Specific Engaged), all reflecting ways in which adults made a deliberate effort to interact with or help youth. The 'Genuine' cluster (Cares, Relationship, Fair) included responses describing adults acting out of an authentic concern for youth. The 'Flexible' cluster (Tolerant, Nonspecific Flexible) includes responses about adult's willingness to adapt their responses to the youth's unique situation. The 'Respect' cluster (Individuality/Autonomy, Nonspecific Respect) comprised responses reflecting acceptance and validation of youth. The 'Adult Characteristics' cluster (Similarity, Relational, Miscellaneous) involved responses that identified favorable characteristics of the adult. 'Understanding' was assigned to statements indicating that the adult understands the youth's unique situation. 'Structure' was used for statements indicating that the adult provides clear expectations or restrictions that help to either keep order in the home or help youth complete their responsibilities.

Girls were more likely than boys to endorse Engaged-Listen, Engaged-Available, Engaged-Meets Emotional Needs, Genuine-Fair, and Respect for Individuality/Autonomy. Older youth were more likely to endorse Engaged-Available, Genuine-Invested, and Respect for Individuality/Autonomy than younger youth. Youth with longer agency tenure were more likely to endorse Genuine-Invested and less likely to endorse Respect for Individuality/Autonomy, compared to youth with shorter tenure.

Conclusions

Findings from this work provide insight into how youth living in a residential facility describe their relationships with child care workers. Some of the most commonly cited themes involved characteristics that make adults pleasant to interact with (e.g., laid back, fun) and involved regular engagement with youth in a variety of informal ways. Explicit statements about flexibility and respect were mentioned less frequently. The data suggest areas relevant for agencies to consider as they cultivate a direct-care workforce that can establish effective working relationships with children to promote healing and growth.

Understanding children's perspectives about relationships with staff in group care: A catalyst for change - Valuing relationship based practice: Promoting greater understanding of children's perspectives at an organisational level.

Ms. Veronica Marin (Life Without Barriers)

In the Australian context, at 30 June 2018, about 45,800 children were in out-of-home care. The vast majority (93%) of children in out-of-home care were in home-based care, mostly with relative or kinship carers (51%), or in foster care (39%). Another 5.8% were living in residential care, mainly used for children with complex needs. While the nature of the relationships between children and adults is among the most critical aspects of a child's experience in out of home care, there are many challenges at a system and organisational level in maintaining the focus on quality relationships including the increasing numbers of children in care, difficulties in recruiting and retaining foster carers and direct care staff and placement instability.

Life Without Barriers (LWB) is one of the largest providers of child, youth and family services in Australia, working in more than 440 communities across the country. Our services currently support around 16,000 people living in their own homes or in residential houses. We support children, young people and families, people with disability, older people and people with mental illness. We work with people who are homeless and refugees and asylum seekers.

At LWB, the wellbeing of children, young people and their families is our greatest concern. We provide a range of services for children, young people and families including home-based foster care, residential care, family contact, post care, youth advocacy and mentoring. We support over 2,000 children and young people in out-of-home care placements and ensuring children are well cared for, supported and respected is an absolute, non-negotiable priority.

Drawing on these experiences, this presentation will discuss the opportunities and challenges of promoting greater understanding of youth perspectives in the context of a large, complex and geographically dispersed organization. It will discuss the ways in which leaders at national, regional and local levels approach:

- Building capacity within the organization to more systematically and routinely take into account the perspectives of children
- Using protocols that help to support the confidentiality and safety of children and staff
- Maximising the likelihood that the views and experiences of young people are communicated to appropriate personnel, reflected upon, and responded to with thoughtful action, and
- Creating the conditions within the organization that support children and young people, staff, and administrators to engage in this as an ongoing process.

The presentation will consider formal channels – such as the progressive implementation of the evidence informed CARE model, which has included administering the Youth Perception survey with young people in our residential care services – as well as informal channels for ensuring that the voices of children and young people are uplifted and heard. It will also discuss awareness raising initiatives for staff at all levels of the organisation to both emphasise the importance of incorporating the perspectives of children and young people in the design and delivery of services and provide support in listening and responding to these perspectives.

Finally, the presentation will consider the importance of organisational culture, values and purpose in providing an environment in which children and young people are encouraged to share their perspectives. It will share both successes and challenges in achieving this from a whole-of-organisation perspective underpinned by a commitment to ensuring that children and young people are involved in decision-making processes that affect them.

Understanding children's perspectives about relationships with staff in group care: A catalyst for change – A Residential Program's Intentional and Systemic Approach to Having Youth Perceptions Drive Practice Change

Mrs. Jean Galle (Hillside Children's Center)

The relationship between children and adult care workers in group care settings is often the catalyst to create an environment for children that promotes change, growth and development. In order for the relationship to develop adult care givers must be open to understanding and valuing the perceptions of youth in their care. They must also be open to developing genuine caring relationships with children that are built on respect and openness to understanding and feedback. The group care setting needs to foster an environment that allows for adult care workers to engage in reflective practice and have openness to create an environment where children feel comfortable to share their thoughts and experiences.

The current presentation will describe the work of a Residential Treatment Facility Program in incorporating data from the Youth Perception of Relationship Quality (YPRQ) measure to implement programmatic change. The presentation will focus on describing (1) the process the program used to administer the survey, review the data and create a non-defensive culture that was open to change, (2) the process utilized to translate findings into action, including specific examples of programmatic changes that occurred, and (3) how the program continues to be attuned to youth perceptions and incorporate youth feedback.

The presentation will first discuss the thoughtful and supportive steps the program took to administer the survey to children and the campus leadership's review of data from the YPRQ as part of the program's overall implementation of Children and Residential Experiences (CARE). Before starting CARE implementation, data from the YPRQ were not consistent with adult care workers' expectations about what the children would say. There were also discrepancies when comparing findings from the YPRQ with adult care workers' self-report data on similar practice domains. Overall, the adult care workers perceived their relationship with children in a higher and more positive way than the children's perspective reflected based on data from the YPRQ . Program leadership was then thoughtful and intentional to create an environment that allowed teams to be self-reflective, to work toward a place of acceptance regarding the youth's perceptions, and not to become defensive or try to dismiss them.

Next there will be a discussion about the specific ways that staff implemented changes as a result of findings from the data. Also discussed will be the ways that leadership gave care workers permission to value and develop genuine relationships with children, helping to increase care workers ability to find increased value in youth's perceptions and increase their ability to be open to change. The program then went through an intentional process in order to identify and implement changes in the way in that residential care was provided to youth. Specific examples will be described highlighting changes to the program and routine, adjustment of expectations for children, and provision of more opportunities for purposeful activities to develop supportive relationships.

Lastly, there will be discussion on the ways the program continues to be attuned to and monitor youth perceptions. Described will be forums for ongoing reflective practice for care workers as well as putting systems[CVI4] and structures in place for youth feedback.

Understanding cultural connection in out-of-home care: Comparing Indigenous Australian youth and adult perspectives

Ms. Jacynta Krakouer (The University of Melbourne)

Indigenous Australian children and young people comprise 36% of Australia's out-of-home care (OOHC) population, a disproportionate rate that is not unique to Australia. As Indigenous Australian children are often separated from their families and communities when entering OOHC, living in statutory care arguably threatens Indigenous Australian children's connection to their culture. This is significant in the context of Australia's historic Stolen Generations.

This presentation discusses the findings of a PhD project conducted by an Indigenous Australian researcher in Victoria, Australia. Using a mixed methods design underpinned by Indigenous Standpoint Theory, the research explored Indigenous Australian people's understandings and experiences of cultural connection in OOHC. 179 Indigenous Australian adults completed a survey about cultural connection, while 10 Indigenous Australian young people (aged between 15-25) with a lived experience of OOHC were interviewed about their understanding and experiences of cultural connection. Qualitative data were analysed thematically with NVIVO software using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis framework. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to generate descriptive statistics.

This presentation discusses the diversity of perspectives about cultural connection held by Indigenous Australian youth and adults. The findings have implications for the ways in we think about our practice with Indigenous Australian children and young people in OOHC. I articulate a range of barriers and enablers to the development of cultural connection, while highlighting the importance of children's agency - and Indigenous self-determination - to navigate the personal, community, and systemic challenges associated with fostering cultural connection in OOHC.

Undertaking Ethnographic Research in Children's Residential Care: Managing an Adult-But-Not-Staff Researcher Identity

Dr. Nadine Fowler (CELCIS, University of Strathclyde)

The purpose of this individual paper presentation is to demonstrate the opportunities available for engaging with children and young people to gain their perspectives in academic research. There has been a marked increase in research focusing on children's experiences of their everyday worlds over the last few decades. This increase has been propelled by a shift in the 1990s towards acknowledging children as social actors with their own views and understandings that we might learn from (Morrow, 1996; Punch, 2002; Beazley et al., 2009). To shed light on these everyday experiences, creative methodologies that do not simply rely on children's written or verbal responses are said to be particularly helpful (Morrow, 2008). This reasoning underpinned the decision to embark upon an ethnographic study to explore how children and young people, as well as staff members, enact and understand their relationships in residential child care. By discussing the research methods employed and the resulting findings, the presentation will show how engaging with children and young people through ethnographic fieldwork provides unique opportunities to understand their perspectives. In addition, the challenges of engaging in ethnographic research in a residential child care setting will also be explored, showcasing opportunities to overcome these challenges and strategies to manage expectations.

There is a growing body of international work which employs ethnographic research methods to gain the views and experiences of children and young people in alternative care settings. In reference to residential child care, some notable studies include: Stockholm's (2009) ethnography of Danish residential care to understand how children form their identities; McIntosh et al.'s (2010) investigation of food practices in Scottish residential settings (see also Dorrer et al., 2010; Punch and McIntosh, 2014), and; Eßer's (2018) and Warwick's (2021) examinations of adult-child touch in residential children's houses in Germany and England (respectively). The common use of Participant Observation allows the researcher to collect 'thick descriptions' of everyday life (Geertz, 1973). Undertaking intense, close, long-term contact with children and young people in these residential settings allows the researchers to take part in daily activities, rituals, interactions and events, building an understanding of the explicit and tacit aspects of children's lives (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011).

Adding to this growing body of work, this presentation will centre around research which sought to explore how relationships are enacted, understood and discussed in residential child care. The research focused on relationships between and among children and young people, as well as staff members, in three residential children's houses in Scotland. Reflecting on 10 months of fieldwork, resulting in 104 days of fieldnotes involving 17 young people and 49 staff members in Scotland, this paper will provide an insight into the lives of children and young people, as well as staff members, living and working in residential child care, while exploring a novel way of gaining their perspectives in academic research.

Using participatory research methods to explore young people's experiences of distance-placements in cases of exploitation

Dr. Lauren Wroe (University of Bedfordshire), Ms. Delphine Peace (University of Bedfordshire)

Objectives: In the UK, professionals working in child welfare sometimes place young people at a significant distance from their home local authority to protect them from abusive extra-familial relationships or exploitation in their communities. This paper explores the use of participatory research methods to elicit young people's perspectives on their experience of distance-placement as part of a mixed-method study on the scale, cost and impact of distance-care placements due to extra-familial harm in the UK. Participatory methods were used with young researchers to design data collection methods and inform analysis, and with young people as research participants to engage them in conversations about physical, relational and psychological safety in relation to distance-placements and abuse in extra-familial contexts.

Methods: Participatory engagement with young people took place over multiple stages. First, data collection methods were designed alongside young researchers (n=8), who are members of the Young Researchers' Advisory Panel (YRAP) at the authors' university. Two focus groups were held with the YRAP, remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Young researchers were shown a draft of the interview-guide. Facilitated by the researcher they engaged in a discussion around the content and wording of the interview questions and led the design of activities to be conducted with young people in the interview, including ways of adapting the methods for online delivery. The online interview was then piloted with one of the young researchers. Interviews were subsequently conducted with young people (n=9) who have experienced distance-placements in cases of extra-familial abuse. After initial coding, emerging themes were sense-checked and dissemination ideas shared with the YRAP in two final focus group discussions.

Results: Young researchers made invaluable contributions to designing semi-structured interviews for youth engagement in the study through prioritising themes, adapting research questions and formulating new ones, refining terminology, and designing activities that were conducted with participants. They suggested splitting the interview into two parts, held within a week of each other to reduce the intensity of the process for participants, suggested the use of and created warm up and cool down activities to book end the interviews, contributed to the design of a 'joint agreement', and helped researchers adapt activities for online delivery. The interview-guide and participatory activities were successfully adapted to online delivery. Young people who participated in the study using these methods were able to articulate and recognise safety in various ways in relation to distance-placements and extra-familial contexts of harm. One activity proved more challenging to conduct online and some participants preferred to talk about themes related to the activity instead. Remote engagement of young people in the interviews raised a number of challenges including how to facilitate wraparound support and to ensure confidentiality; collaboration with the YRAP and the young participants helped to resolve these issues. Following data collection the YRAP supported the analysis process by helping the researchers to interpret the data and sense-check emerging themes.

Conclusions: There are clear benefits to engaging young people both as participants and as research advisors to inform the research process. Findings from the use of participatory research methods, and from the Securing Safety study more broadly, raise pertinent questions on how professionals engage in conversations with young people and families about safety when making decisions about distance-placement as a response to extra-familial harm. During the interview, young people reported varying levels of insight into what was happening and why; including challenges with communicating with professionals and not being involved in decision-making processes about out-of-home care. Participatory methods used in this study demonstrate the

value of the conversations, and clarity within them, when it comes to using distance-placement in cases of extra-familial harm.

Vaping Research Slam: A model for engaging adolescents in community-based research

Ms. Stephanie Martin (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Annie Smith (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Maya Peled (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Katie Horton (McCreary Centre Society)

Objectives: The Vaping Research Slam engaged young people in the child welfare system and a diverse mix of other adolescents in a project to investigate electronic-cigarette use (vaping) among young people in British Columbia, Canada.

The Research Slam is a fast paced, short-term, peer-to-peer youth-engagement model which supports youth to gain community-based research skills and explore topics of interest to them. The Research Slam is organised by members of the Youth Research Academy (YRA) at the McCreary Centre Society, a non-profit research agency in British Columbia, Canada. The YRA supports youth aged 16 to 24 with experience of the child welfare system to design, deliver and disseminate research projects of interest to these youth and the agencies that serve them.

Method: Nineteen young people (aged 16 to 24), including those with experience of the child welfare system and other multi-barriered and diverse adolescents, took part in the Vaping Research Slam over two days. Youth participants discussed their views on vaping; generated ideas to support youth who vape and to share the potential risks of vaping with their peers; developed an analysis plan to analyse vaping data from the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS); learned to run statistics using SPSS Complex Samples; conducted and wrote up statistical analyses; and presented their findings and key messages to stakeholders from the local Health Authority, and agencies responsible for smoking cessation programs. YRA mentors carried out peer-to-peer training with support from McCreary staff. Participants completed an evaluation form at the start and end of their involvement.

Results: Through their analyses of the population-level BC AHS (N= 38,015 young people aged 12 to 19), participants identified important issues pertaining to vaping among adolescents.

Adolescents in the child welfare system were more likely to have vaped in the past month than those without child welfare experience (e.g., 32% of young people who had been in foster care had vaped in the past month, compared to 22% who had not been in foster care). Adolescents were also at increased risk for vaping if they used other substances, slept for less than 8 hours, missed out on mental health services they needed, and played sports regularly.

Analyses of the BC AHS data also highlighted factors which may be protective against vaping among BC adolescents. These included having friends with prosocial attitudes towards substance use, having a helpful adult to turn to, feeling connected to community, and finding spirituality important.

Findings from the Vaping Research Slam have helped to inform education-based resources to support adolescents to make informed decisions about vaping. Dissemination materials created by participants in the Vaping Research Slam have been presented to all of BC's 60 school districts and have been utilised across Canada and in other countries.

Evaluation findings indicated that most youth who participated in the Vaping Research Slam reported gaining skills in research and other areas which would help them with their education and employment. They also reported the experience was personally meaningful to them, that they learned about vaping risks, and increased their knowledge of vaping-related information and resources.

Conclusion: This approach successfully engaged youth in government care as peer mentors with other diverse youth in the research process, including quantitative data analysis and in identifying research questions that were relevant and meaningful to them. Not only was informative data collected on adolescent vaping behaviours, which helped to inform education-based resources and programming, but the Vaping Research Slam also supported youth to develop skills to foster their well-being.

Vocational Integration – the Perspective of Care Leavers and Professionals

Ms. Renate Stohler (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family), Dr. Karin Werner (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family)

As in many other countries, child and youth welfare ends at the age of majority (18 years) in most of the 26 Swiss cantons and young men and women must leave foster or residential care. In many cases, young women and men are still in post-compulsory education when leaving the residential home or the foster family. Therefore, care leavers have to cope with several transitions in a very short period of time: becoming an adult, starting a post-compulsory education and leaving foster or residential care.

In our contribution we will present selected findings of a recently completed research project on the topic of education and vocational integration of care leavers. The project was carried out at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Social Work and set the focus on the following **research questions**: What challenges are young people in residential care facing when choosing a career? Are there particular challenges for young people during vocational training? What sort of support are they receiving for career choices and vocational trainings? To get empirical knowledge to these questions the perspectives of young people, social workers in residential homes and professionals from the field of vocational education and training were included. The main **objectives** of the project are: support the professional integration of care leavers, raise awareness of social workers and professionals involved in training.

Method: We conducted group-discussions and semi-structured interviews with young people living in residential care (N=11), semi-structured interviews with social workers in residential homes (N=8) as well as with professionals in the context of vocational education (N=29). The qualitative content analysis of the data is based on deductive and inductive created categories.

The **results** show that young people are confronted with several challenges concerning post-compulsory education such as stigmatization, individual or psychological problems or little support from their families but they also get various forms of support by social workers, especially during crisis. It became also evident that teachers in vocational schools or vocational trainers in companies do not perceive care leavers as a particularly noticeable and problematic group and that there exists no systematic knowledge about the professional careers of care leavers.

One **conclusion** of our research is that completing a first post-compulsory education is an important goal for all respondents. But it became also evident that care leavers are disadvantaged in their choice of occupation and have more requirements during vocational training and that more research is needed concerning their further professional development.

VOICES OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: FINDINGS FROM THE ITALIAN LONGITUDINAL STUDY “CRESCERE”

Mrs. Cinzia Canali (Fondazione Emanuela Zancan), Dr. Devis Geron (Fondazione Emanuela Zancan), Dr. Tiziano Vecchiato (Fondazione Emanuela Zancan)

The longitudinal study “CRESCERE” (“growing up” in Italy) monitored more than 1,000 children and adolescents in North-eastern Italy over time, from 12 to 18 years old. Starting from 2013, 6 waves were conducted involving children selected through a stratified random sampling from lists of residents and through schools. Information was collected through a questionnaire aimed at analysing different areas: functional (health conditions, sports activities, …), cognitive-behavioural (self-perception, school pathway, language skills, bullying, …), environmental-relational (relationships with classmates, friends, family, …) and values (happiness and wellbeing, volunteering, future work, …). Scales and indicators were used to facilitate international comparisons (i.e. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Andrews-Withey Faces Scale, IPPA Inventory, AMOS for motivation, concentration and well-being at school and other questions and tools created ad hoc), in addition to open questions for better understanding how children feel and what they think about key issues, such as the quality of their life, their spare time, their relationships.

Overall, the study aimed: 1) to understand how children grow up in their transition from childhood to adulthood; 2) to identify the factors which promote wellbeing; 3) to support parents, teachers, social workers, educators, policy makers and other professionals involved in their development and growth.

After 6 years we can present the overall results of the study. In particular, we observed the levels of wellbeing and self-esteem in children and adolescents over time: the percentage of children fully satisfied gradually decreases with age and differences are statistically significant; there are also significant changes in their relationships with parents, in their motivation and well-being at school. A specific attention was devoted also to the potentials of the study in terms of health promotion, risk prevention and education. The voices of children and adolescents have allowed us to understand how they grow and how they feel their place in the society, specifically considering their orientation towards their future work.

The words of adolescents express positively what is often perceived negatively, i.e. their difficulties growing up today. In this context, their words and messages are a valuable tool for better understanding their world. The study offers opportunities to understand how children and adolescents can grow up well in a society with many problems and conflicts, how they see their future and invest in authentic relationships among peers.

Voices of LGBTQIA+ youth in care. “To that piece in each of us that refuses to be silent” - Child welfare assessments: consequences of misconception of queer youth

Dr. Veronika Paulsen (NTNU Social Research)

Objective

LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning or queer) youth in the child welfare system have received little attention in research and practice (McCormick et al. 2016), also in Norway (Paulsen et al. 2020). The lack of attention has led to that many child welfare workers lack the necessary competencies and knowledge to provide LGBTQ youth help and services that meets their needs (Mallon, 2017; Kaasbøl og Paulsen, 2019). Knowledge and awareness is also of critical importance to be able to understand and assess these young people and their needs, which is the focus of this presentation.

Method

This presentation is based on data from the project on ‘LGBTQ-perspectives in Child Welfare Services’ that NTNU Social Research and SINTEF Digital has carried out with funding from the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Paulsen et al. 2020). The aim of the project was to study how the child welfare system encounters children and young people with LGBTQ identity and whether child welfare services are succeeding in meeting the needs of these young people. This presentation is mainly based on interviews with child welfare workers and young people.

Results

A big part of the job for child welfare workers consists of assessing the needs of children, young people and their families in different situations. How child welfare workers understand and approach a problem/situation also includes a certain assessment of how they think the problem should be solved. This requires knowledge, consciousness and understanding of the unique situations and challenges one can meet, and I will look at how limited consciousness can lead to misconceptions in assessments of the young people’s needs. Thus I will look at child welfare workers assessments when working with LGBTQ young people, and shed light on how the different understandings can lead to different actions/measures – and discuss what implications this can have for the young people themselves. This will be by showing three examples of “typical” situations, e.g situations where youths uncertainty about own gender or sexual identity are assessed as psychological challenges, which will be shed light on from interviews with child welfare workers and young people. I will also look at the challenges of young people’s possibilities of participation in child welfare assessment. This is a general challenge but could be even more challenging for queer youth, especially if they are not asked or if there is no opening for telling about their identity.

Conclusion

The findings in this study shows that increased awareness, knowledge and skills of child welfare workers is of critical importance to be able to assess and meet the needs of LGBTQ youth. Raising the competence and the consciousness could also be an important contribution to in changing the focus in child welfare practice from problems and risk towards more focus on young people’s identity, openness and participatory practices.

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Voluntary care in Ireland: professionals' views on children's participation in decision-making

Dr. Kenneth Burns (University College Cork), Prof. Conor O'Mahony (University College Cork), Dr. Rebekah Brennan (University College Cork)

Voluntary care arrangements under section 4 of the Child Care Act 1991 are a crucial component of Ireland's child protection system. They account for c.55% of admissions to the care system. However, while there is a growing volume of published international research analysing court and court-like care proceedings, there have been no empirical Irish studies and very few international studies to date of voluntary care arrangements. In Ireland, a voluntary care agreement is where a parent signs an agreement to place their child in state care. The parent(s) retain their rights including decision-making powers for important matters (medical care, education, religion, travel), and they can cancel the agreement at any time. There is no prescribed period for the length of these agreements.

The "Voluntary Care in Ireland" project (2019-2021) at University College Cork is a mixed-methods approach utilizing a national survey of social workers, interviews with lawyers for both Tusla and the Legal Aid Board, focus groups with social workers, and interviews with parents to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of voluntary care. Key themes emerging from the research include challenges around ensuring free and informed consent by parents; participation by children in the decision-making process; and independent oversight of voluntary care arrangements to ensure that the best interests of the child are given priority.

This presentation will present findings from this research as they relate to the rights of children. Specifically, the presentation will present new data on professionals' views on children's participation in decision-making in voluntary care agreements. The key finding is that professionals are reluctant to place this decision-making "burden" on children and they provide a clear rationale for this position. However, this position is at variance with policies on children's participation in decision-making and international legislative developments which are increasingly unequivocally including children in decision-making in voluntary care arrangements. The paper concludes with recommendations for reform of the voluntary care system, including amendments to S.4 of the Child Care Act 1991 which our research data suggests is not fit for purpose.

Vulnerability and the "loss of childhood". Inquiries into child sexual abuse in institutions

Prof. Sabine Andresen (goe)

The presentation will focus on child sexual abuse in institutions like schools, sports clubs etc. It will start with an overview about international data and results of inquiries. Coming from that I will focus on reports of victims and survivors to the "Independent Commission into Child Sexual Abuse" in Germany. The Commissions mission is to investigate the extent, nature, causes and consequences of sexual abuse in institutions and in the family context in the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR from 1949 to the present day. In particular, it aims to provide a suitable framework for listening to victims and survivors as well as contemporary witnesses. In 2019 the Inquiry published recommendations to institutions on the basis of the survivors reports. I would like to shed light on how to investigate into past failures to protect children from sexual abuse in institutional settings. The analysis aims to look at aspects of vulnerability.

Walking alongside young people leaving care: Evaluation of a strengths-based, person-led community support model

Ms. Raynette Bierman (Ipsos MORI), Dr. Claudia Mollidor (Ipsos MORI), Mr. Neil Whitehead (Derby City Council)

Local Area Coordination is an all-age support model originating in Western Australia; however, when several local authorities in England and Wales adopted the model, it was primarily integrated into adult services with a focus on older adults. In 2018, Derby City Council extended Local Area Coordination to include young adults who recently left care (aged 16+), funded by the UK Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme. Alongside delivery, an independent evaluation was commissioned, including a process strand to explore the extension and implementation of Local Area Coordination with young people leaving care as well as an impact strand to assess key outcomes and gather views from young people and staff.

Young people leaving care are less likely to have strong and reliable support networks that they trust, particularly when they have experienced multiple placement changes and high turnover of social workers. Alongside other factors, this can negatively impact their quality of life and may result in not accessing the support they need or alternatively, inappropriately using or over-relying on services.

Local Area Coordination is a community-based approach that aims to empower individuals to develop their personal strengths and find solutions within their community before considering formal services. Local Area Coordinators embed themselves within a community and provide personalised one-to-one support and advice to individuals who may be isolated or rely heavily on formal services. Through a flexible but principle-driven approach, Coordinators ask people 'what would make a good life for you?' and help them to identify and develop their strengths, needs, and opportunities. As a person-led approach, individuals choose whether they want a Local Area Coordinator and what they want to focus on. Coordinators should then 'walk alongside' them as they build their confidence, capacity and connections to improve their independence, resilience and support networks.

This evaluation adds to the evidence of 14 other independent evaluations of Local Area Coordination conducted in England and Wales, however, it is the first to focus specifically on young people leaving care. The key methods for data collection included: surveys and case studies with young people supported by a Local Area Coordinator; interviews and focus groups with the Local Area Coordination team and senior staff members; monitoring data collected by the delivery team on an ongoing basis; statutory data collected by the local authority; and comparison with a group of care leavers not supported by Local Area Coordination.

This paper will discuss the results of the evaluation, including findings from both process and impact strands. The extension of Local Area Coordination to include young people leaving care was facilitated by being an all-age and person-led approach with flexibility to tailor support based on needs, circumstances and opportunities. Young people described the support positively, emphasising that they could rely on their Local Area Coordinator while also being encouraged to be more independent. The informal nature of the support was also viewed as an important feature. This paper will also discuss key considerations regarding the replicability and scalability of Local Area Coordination support for young people leaving care, and lessons learnt regarding its integration with wider statutory services, including traditional care leaver services.

We are one, but we are not the same: Ethnic socialization of transculturally placed ethnic minority foster youths in The Netherlands

Mrs. Clementine Degener (Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences), Dr. Diana Van Bergen (University of Groningen), Prof. Hans Grietens (KU Leuven)

Transculturally placed ethnic minority youths in foster care may show ethnic identity struggles or losses. It is to assume that ethnic socialization, as provided by the ethnic majority foster parents, plays a role in the development of these youths' ethnic identity. To better understand ethnic socialization messages in transcultural foster care in The Netherlands, we conducted a comparative dyadic analysis, wherein we adressed the following question:

What ethnic socialization do foster parents give and what ethnic socialization do transculturally placed foster youths receive by their foster parents, and how do both perspectives interact?

In our analysis, we compared the accounts of 16 foster youths and their foster parents within each dyad. After that, we compared the outcomes between dyads.

The outcomes show that foster parents seem to strive to belong together as one family. As part of those efforts, they would incorporate ethnicity differences, and/or struggle with how to address them. This occurred in a reciprocal socialization process with their foster youths. Next, although foster youths could experience discrimination, there seemed to exist a relative silence about it in foster families. Results furthermore show that birth parents may play a role as connectors with the ethnic backgrounds of the foster youths. This study stresses the importance of foster care agencies to guide foster parents in learning how to address ethnicity issues openly, teaching their foster youths how to survive in a society where ethnic minority discrimination occurs, and involving birth parents in the ethnic socialization of their foster youths.

We stick together! COVID-19 and psychological adjustment in youth residential care

Dr. Mónica Costa (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Prof. Catarina Pinheiro Mota (Department of Education and Psychology, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro), Dr. Beatriz Santos (Department of Education and Psychology, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro), Dr. Helena Carvalho (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Dr. Tiago Ferreira (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto), Prof. Paula Mena Matos (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto)

The COVID-19 pandemic had a great impact also on residential care institutions. These contexts were forced to introduce many adaptations to their regular functioning in order to serve children and families throughout such unpredictable times. According to the literature adolescents in residential care have an increased risk of developing psychological, behavioral and social problems compared with general population rearing with their biological families. Our purpose was to examine the effects of cohesion on adolescents' psychological adjustment over the COVID pandemic. We tested whether adolescents‘ perception of cohesion in residential care mitigates the emergency of adolescents‘ psychological adjustment during the current pandemic situation on previous association. Participants were 243 adolescents 12 to 18 aged, living in 21 different residential care institutions. The results suggested a moderating role of cohesion on the stability of adolescents' emotional distress across time. Lower levels of cohesion were related with higher emotional distress stability across time. On the contrary, as cohesion increased, the association between adolescents' emotional distress at T0 and T1 decreased. Results are discussed considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the psychological adjustment of adolescents living in residential care.

We're just kids as well: the existence, experience and support needs of young kinship carers

Mrs. Joanne Roff (Integrated Family and Youth Services), Dr. Meredith Kiraly (Honorary Research Fellow University of Melbourne)

This presentation will describe ground-breaking Australian research to identify the prevalence and life experiences of young kinship carers, most of whom are siblings and young aunts/uncles. This research was presented in an early stage at EUSARF in 2016. The project is now complete and the research report is available online as well as three articles published in British journals.

Numbers of children in kinship foster care continue to rise in many Western countries. Much greater numbers of children are living with extended family or friends in private care arrangements. A widespread assumption is that most kinship carers are grandparents; in fact, there is little published data about the diversity of relationships between children and their kin carers. However, by analysing 2001 and 2011 census data, Bristol University researchers revealed the existence of large numbers of British young people raising younger siblings, apparently mostly in private arrangements. These young carers were identified as predominantly female, single, frequently living in poverty, and forgoing education and employment opportunities. These researchers enjoined researchers in other countries to explore whether there may be hidden populations of sibling carers elsewhere, and if so, the circumstances under which they are living. Another English study published in 2011 involved a survey and interviews with sibling carers who were found to be struggling with their caring role, financial circumstances and social isolation and in some cases, mental health, with limited casework or financial support.

Inspired by these British studies, this Australian study was established to determine the prevalence of sibling kinship carers and to explore their circumstances and support needs. The first part of the research project followed the Bristol project by starting with analysis of census data. However, it emerged that the carer-child relationship was difficult to identify from Australian census data. The study therefore re-focused on young kinship carers, that is, carers aged 30 years or less raising young siblings, nephews, nieces and other relatives. The census analysis conducted has identified the prevalence of two generational kinship care households in Australia across the age spectrum. Challenging the view that almost all kinship carers are grandparents, 20 percent of such households were found to involve kinship carers aged 30 or less. An unknown additional number may exist in multi generational households.

The second part of the research project comprised forty-two interviews with both informal and formal young kinship carers, and 16 with young people in the care of a young kinship carer. The interviews found that the children in these families were generally being provided with stable, supportive care, and most had shown marked positive development since care began, including significant resolution of some serious mental health issues related to their earlier experiences of trauma and abuse. However the circumstances of their carers echoed those of the British sibling care studies, including poverty, social isolation, and opportunity costs with regard to education and employment.

An academic/professional practice partnership has established between the primary researcher and a Queensland kinship care service to focus on practice development emerging from these research findings. Activities to date have included a program of advocacy for better support with policymakers and community services, conducted in partnership with a group of young kinship carers. The partnership is now seeking funding for a pilot national support service for young kinship carers. Assistance has also been provided to a prominent British service provider in their efforts to extend services to younger kinship carers.

It is hoped that this work may also inspire efforts in other countries to identify the prevalence of young kinship carers, and to provide greater support to young carers and children/youth in their care.

What About the Boys? The Challenge of Identifying and Treating Male Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth in Residential Care

Dr. Nick Ryan (Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services), Ms. Gina Peck-Sobolewski (Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services)

The realities and implications of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of children and adolescence is beyond imaginable and calls for policy, advocacy, and trauma-informed and trauma-responsive prevention and intervention. According to the Polaris Project (2014), "An estimated 100,000 children are traded for sex in the United States each year." Foster youth and those in care are at elevated risks (Perkins, et al. 2017; Ijadi-Maghsoodi, et al. 2016; Dank, et al. 2017). Youth in out-of-home care may come from a multi-stressed home environment, have been victims of sexual and/or physical abuse, witnessed domestic violence, have mental health and substance abuse issues, and/or have loss of a parent or lack of parent support all of which put youth at increased risk of exploitation (Administrative Office of the Courts). While the literature is increasingly calling attention to the prevalence of CSE in youth, there is far less documented about male victim involvement. Adult biased beliefs about boys not being victims of CSE contributes to this problem, leading to a lack of screening and intake by law enforcement and social service agencies (Roberts, 2013). In addition, boys may be less likely to disclose and/or will often deny CSE involvement, primarily due to stigma (e.g., fears of being outed as 'gay' or perceived as 'gay') or bias (e.g., not believed when they do come forward) (Roberts, 2013). A study conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2014) found 21.8% homeless and runaway males reported a sex trafficking experience and 24% of one sample of 800 juvenile justice-involved boys were arrested for prostitution.

Youth in out-of-home care require and deserve safeguarding as well competent trauma-informed intervention practices to reduce the effects of sexual exploitation among other adverse childhood experiences during their lifetime. A trauma informed and responsive program involves youth in the treatment process, provides trauma screening, staff training, accesses to referral sources and engages partnering organizations, all of which are crucial elements to safeguarding youth (Menschner & Maul, 2016). Shedding light on this vulnerable male population may call attention to the need for advocacy and policy change. Giving voice to an often-silenced population, this presentation will highlight male involvement in CSE and discuss the unique needs of identifying, assessing, and treating male victims.

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What are the main challenges for the care system according to young people above the age of 25 with a care background?

Dr. Gemma Crous (University of Barcelona), Ms. Marta Matás (University of Girona), Ms. Judit Gallart (University of Girona), Dr. Carme Montserrat (University of Girona)

Introduction

Most studies present results of care leavers interviewed when they are between 18 and 21 years old, however little is known about what happens to them in their later life. The starting hypothesis of the present study is that their lives become more stable and with similar characteristics to their peers of general population, although they had to overcome a lot of difficulties and to grow up rapidly.

Aim

Hence, the study is pursuing a twofold objective. On the one hand, knowing how is going to young people from the age of 25 onwards and, on the other hand, identify from their experience, what are the main challenges of care systems to improve children's well-being, including their transition into their adulthood.

Method

Mixed methods were used according to the objectives. At the first aim, a brief questionnaire was sent through the social networks trying to get participants aged between 25 and 35 years old, who were in the care system and still remain in it at the age of 16 years old (N=53). Questions were asked related to their current life (family, employment, housing, education, friends) and also about their experience and satisfaction with the care system. At the end of the questionnaire we asked if they wanted to participate in a second phase. 13 interviews were conducted to get more in depth about their current situation, challenges of the care system and factors involved in their transitions to adulthood. Content analysis was used for the qualitative data.

Results

According to the results of the questionnaires, participants do not currently present indicators of social exclusion, despite some of them had suffered serious difficulties when they left the care system. In the interviews, young people pointed out challenges for the care system regarding how to avoid personal insecurity and the high perception of victimization that they have during their childhood and adolescence, or the importance of building up at least one stable and secure bond of emotional-affective support. These are challenges that require far-reaching reforms in order to be carried out, because they appeal to the complexity to establish their future plans, to the participation of children and young people in the information and decision-making process, and to the staff stability, to give just a few examples. Young people talk about the dilemma of studying versus working, about the lack of knowledge they have about the existing resources for them, and about the importance of financial support to enable them to continue their studies. They are aware of their maturity development faster than the rest of their peers, the high responsibility they assume especially when they turn 18, and the recognition of those family behaviours "that they do not want to repeat".

Conclusions

The resilience that emerges from both quantitative and qualitative studies is against the continuous messages about expectations of an adulthood anchored in the most absolute marginalization. We can learn from them by how they develop coping strategies against the difficulties they encounter on their pathways, as well as along which lines the care systems need to improve in order to avoid such difficulties.

What can epidemiological data on child maltreatment tell about the perspective of the child? - Risk factors for child abuse, neglect and exposure to IPV in early childhood in a representative cross-sectional sample

Dr. Christoph Liel (German Youth Institute), Mrs. Susanne Marlene Ulrich (German Youth Institute), Mr. Simon Lorenz (German Youth Institute), Mr. Andreas Eickhorst (Fac. V Diaconic Studies, Health Care and Social Work, University of Applied Sciences, Hanover), Prof. John Fluke (Kempe Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado), Prof. Sabine Walper (German Youth Institute)

Session Chair: Andreas Jud

Objectives

The Children in Germany - KiD 0–3 national main study (Liel et al., 2020) is a cross-sectional study on adversity in early childhood and parental access to support services, conducted as part of a long-term policy program for early intervention services in Germany.

Objectives were to identify risk factors for child maltreatment and whether these risk factors are associated with abuse, neglect and exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV). Parental use of early intervention programs or contact to child welfare services were included in the analysis.

Method

8,063 families with infants and toddlers participated in the survey. Parents answered a written questionnaire during mandatory health checks for the child. The sampling was based on a regionally clustered model of paediatricians' practices. An automatic variable selection process was used to test risk factors and to employ logistic regression models for each outcome.

Results

Significant risk factors ($p<0.05$) for child abuse (1.91%) were child age, IPV and parental stress. Neglect (0.80%) was associated with couple distress, adverse childhood experiences, young maternal age, cramped housing, and migration history. IPV (2.71%) was associated with child age, couple distress, depression/anxiety, harsh punishment, adverse childhood experiences, young maternal age, and poverty. Parents were more likely to use selective prevention programs in cases of child abuse and exposure to IPV.

Conclusions

Child abuse is mainly associated with proximal risk factors and neglect with distal factors. Exposure to IPV violence is associated with child abuse as well as with an accumulation of adversities. The association between service use and child maltreatment is discussed.

Recommendations or takeaway points for the audience

KiD–3 shows parental self-report as an additional source of information to administrative data. To the body of international research in child maltreatment, the study adds representative data for children aged 0-3, which is the target group of early intervention programs in Germany. Many risk factors were confirmed as well as three risk-models differing for child abuse, neglect and exposure to IPV. Aside from risk modelling, families' participation of selective prevention programs is associated with child abuse and exposure to IPV as well. Maybe selective early prevention programs might benefit from targeting family conflict and child maltreatment issues.

What can epidemiological data on child maltreatment tell about the perspective of the child? – The influence of child characteristics on worker decision making: An analysis of the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect

Dr. Barbara Fallon (University of Toronto), Ms. Rachael Lefebvre (University of Toronto), Dr. Nico Trocmé (McGill University, School of Social Work), Dr. Joanne Filippelli (University of Toronto), Ms. Nicolette Joh-Carnella (University of Toronto), Ms. Emmaline Houston (University of Toronto)

Objectives

This study uses the results of the latest cycle of the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (OIS-2018) to examine the contribution of child characteristics to worker decision-making in transfers to ongoing child protection services and placements in out-of-home care. Evidence from previous incidence studies in Canada have shown that most of the variance in worker decision-making during child protection investigations is explained by risk factors associated with caregivers in the home and worker and organizational characteristics.

Methods

The OIS-2018 is the sixth provincial study to examine the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of the children and families investigated by child protection services in Ontario. The OIS-2018 tracked 7,115 child maltreatment-related investigations conducted in a representative sample of 18 Child Welfare Service agencies across Ontario in the fall of 2018. Data were collected directly from investigating child welfare workers upon the completion of their initial investigations. Workers were asked to provide clinical information on a variety of case, household, caregiver, and child characteristics. Child functioning classifications that reflect physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural issues were documented based on a checklist of 17 challenges that investigating child welfare workers were likely to know. Information was also collected on several short-term service dispositions, including transfers to ongoing services and placements in out-of-home care. Using an ecological approach, multi-level logistic regression models were developed to predict transfers to ongoing child protection services and placements in out-of-home care.

Results

There were an estimated 148,536 maltreatment-related investigations conducted in Ontario in 2018 (62.89 per 1,000 children). Sixty-four percent focused on a concern of maltreatment (40.0 per 1,000 children) and 36 percent of investigations (22.89 per 1,000 children) focused on concerns about risk of future maltreatment. Twenty-six percent of maltreatment investigations were substantiated and in six percent of risk investigations, the worker concluded that there was a significant risk of future maltreatment. Exposure to intimate partner violence represented the largest proportion of substantiated maltreatment investigations (45%), followed by neglect (21%) and physical abuse (19%). At least one child functioning concern was noted in 32% of investigations (an estimated 47,700 investigations or 20.20 per 1,000 children), and at least one primary caregiver risk factor was noted in 54% of investigations (an estimated 79,479 investigations or 33.65 per 1,000 children).

Twenty percent of investigations remained opened for ongoing child protection services (an estimated 29,407 investigations or 12.45 per 1,000 children), and three percent of investigations resulted in an out-of-home placement for the child (an estimated 4,185 investigations or 1.77 investigations per 1,000 children).

Multivariate models showed that caregiver risk factors were the strongest predictors of the decision to transfer a case for ongoing child protection services, and assessment of the child did not play a significant role in this decision. However, caregiver risk factors and child characteristics both significantly predicted placements in out-of-home care. Worker role (specialist versus generic) within the organization explained some of the variance in the placement disposition and the location of the organization impacted the transfer to ongoing service decision.

Conclusion

The OIS-2018 provides a rich source of data within the context of a scarcity of clinical data collected for children and families involved with the Canadian child welfare system. This analysis looks at two service dispositions, transfers to ongoing services and placements in out-of-home care, to understand the clinical factors that influence these decisions and how the investigated child's characteristics play a role in worker decision-making. Implications for practice and policy models will be discussed.

What can out of home children's drawings tell us about their relationships with others? Exploring emotional bonds formed in school through children's drawings

Ms. Estefanía Díaz (auto)

In a moment where child protective services in Mexico are beginning to restructure and diversify the options for children in out of home care, research on child welfare becomes essential to understand the problems that Mexican children face in their everyday lives, in order to take the findings into consideration when implementing family foster care and reshaping residential care. Although in Mexico there wasn't any research found informing the educational itinerary of institutionalized childhood, numerous articles in European countries have pointed out that these students tend to be excluded from the educational system at a higher rate and at an earlier age than the rest of the population.

The present abstract derives from an investigation published as a master thesis that concluded in 2018. Parting from research that provides quantitative evidence that children in welfare are excluded, both by teachers and classmates, from academic activities, this research was a case study that took place in a Mexican public elementary school to which 50 children living in a residential care institution attend. The main objective was to analyze the construction of self of the children in residential care through their day-to-day interactions with teachers and classmates. This abstract presents the analysis of the sense that children make of their interactions and the bonds they build with their peers and the adults in their life (the teachers and the staff at the residential institution). Since previous research has shown the central role teachers play in the lives and school trajectories of children living out of the home, how children experience and portray these experiences becomes central when trying to understand their educational experiences.

The method used was narrative inquiry and both children and teachers' narratives were produced and collected within the school space. The methodological approach was designed to privilege qualitative approaches that allow for a better understanding of the meanings and interpretations that children give to their own lives and experiences. While both writing and drawing were used as techniques to collect data, the analysis presented here centers on the drawings. In this sense, this research concurs with other authors that state that children's drawings constitute a door to childhood mental representations, perceptions, and emotions; and therefore, can be a resource that contributes richness and depth to research centered on children.

Results show that, although children had been attending that school for two years when the study took place, children living in out of home care do not portray their relationship with their teachers in their narratives, which could take us to believe that they do not consider them central to their educational experiences, even though their interaction with them on a day-to-day basis showed closeness and frequent interaction on breaks and other free times, not only in the classroom. Other peers, also living in residential care appear a lot more frequently in the drawings. However, in the drawings that peers do appear, characteristics such as position and size, often portray distance. It was also observed that children represent their bond with other children, by drawing games or sports, activities that facilitate engagement. Results coincide with other studies that explore the relationships that children living in welfare form with others, highlighting the importance of peer relationships in positive educational experiences and lack of support from authority figures, including teachers, as a factor that contributes to explain the educational inequality that they experience. Furthermore, the methodological approach that was used shows the relevance of using children's drawings as a way to explore the different perspectives students have of diverse school and educational experiences.

What contributes to a good foster care placement - Factors contributing to optimal placement decision making in the Australian context

Dr. Jenna Meiksans (Australian Centre for Child protection), Prof. Fiona Arney (Australian Centre for Child protection)

Background: The challenges associated with placing children in the way that best meets their needs are particularly evident in the Australian context, due to difficulties recruiting and retaining the numbers of carers required to support increasing numbers of children remaining in care for longer, and to support children with histories characterised by complex trauma, abuse and neglect. Once in care, children are often reported to experience multiple placements or to be languishing in placements ill-fitted to their long-term needs. Despite this, few studies have examined the factors leading to decisions about where children will live when they are removed from home, and only one study to date has explored what contributes to placement decision making in the Australian context.

Objective: This presentation will examine the factors influencing optimal placement decision making in the Australian context.

Methods:A two-phased qualitative study was undertaken in order to examine the perspectives of practitioners in the child protection, justice, education and health sectors involved in decision making about placement. A brief online survey was completed by 153 practitioners to identify the factors influencing this decision. In-depth interviews, guided by the critical incident technique, were then undertaken with 10 practitioners to explore how these factors combine and interact in real cases where placement decisions went well or not well. Results were analysed using a grounded approach to identify themes regarding the factors influencing decision making and patterns with regard to the way these factors interact to contribute to optimal placement.

Findings: Consistent with existing decision making research, factors relating to the case, decision maker, systems and organisations were identified as influencing optimal placement. Australian practitioners viewed factors relating to foster and kinship carers as playing an important role in determining placement for children, indicating an important addition to decision making theory. This presentation will specifically focus on findings relating to this aspect of decision making, exploring the intentional and unintentional aspects of carers' lives that practitioners perceived to play a role in determining optimal placement. Case examples that went well and not well were relatively indistinguishable, highlighting that in addition to factors relating to foster and kinship carers, a range of case, decision maker, organisational and systems factors must align to contribute to a good placement for children.

Implications: Key implications for research, policy and practice in out of home care will be discussed, including immediately modifiable aspects of foster and kinship carer recruitment and support that may improve placement decision making for children. The role of foster and kinship carers in contributing to optimal placement should be further explored in future research, including exploring this decision making process from the carers' perspective.

What contributes to a good foster care placement - Lessons Learned to Deinstitutionalize Children in Developing Economy Contexts: Foster Care in Jordan

Dr. Rawan W. Ibrahim (German Jordanian University), Dr. Lisa Holmes (Rees Centre), Dr. Ellie Suh (The Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford), Dr. noor amawi (Indepedent Consultant)

Objectives: The Resolution on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, focuses specifically on children without parental care and emphasizes the importance of growing up in a family environment. Thus, ending child institutionalization through progressive replacement with family and community-based care is a central aim. This Resolution supports ongoing deinstitutionalization efforts, particularly in developing-economy contexts where there is an over-reliance on institutional care. In the Middle East multiple factors hinder a shift from institutional models to family-based care e.g. lacking professionalization of social work, poor resources and infrastructures for evidence-based decision-making, and a conservative culture that often stigmatizes children with a care history. Despite these challenges, Jordan developed a foster care program in 2010 based on an implementation science framework, which now serves circa 260 children.

This paper utilizes Jordan's experience as a developing-economy and culturally conservative country in deinstitutionalizing children via the introduction of foster care. The paper draws on two studies; Foster Care in Jordan and Implementation Science (Ibrahim 2019-2021) and An Investment Case for Sustainable Community-Based Foster Care in Jordan (Holmes, Ibrahim, Shuh and Amawi 2019-2020).

Methods: Methods include two phases. The first entails a methodical review of all program documents, research activities and reports against a proposed set of frameworks developed by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN). These frameworks range from selecting interventions through to improvement cycles and implementation drivers. Guided by review findings, and supplemented by the mixed methods approach of a time use study (Holmes and McDermid, 2012) to explore the necessary investment to expand foster care in Jordan, purposive sampling was used to recruit service providers, key stakeholders as well as long-standing foster families and those that joined more recently to participate in focus groups (5) and semi-structured interviews (N = 35).

Results: Preliminary findings suggest that political will and commitment to deinstitutionalize children is ongoing. Despite the nascent stage of the professionalization of social work, significant strides were taken to establish foster care. Identified good practices included selecting and manualizing evidence-based interventions based on factors such as suitability for children in care and practitioners' levels of experience, the development of a multifaceted training module and a core training team that would lead building capacities of new practitioners for program expansion.

Despite these achievements, emerging findings suggest that budget cuts had significant implications on the implementation of interventions and child monitoring. Moreover, findings from focus groups and interviews with foster parents provided insight into the supports that were necessary for good placements. As particularly evidenced by long-standing foster carers that remained committed to fostering despite the impacts of budget cuts (which included more than halving already meager financial support), these insights were derived through foster family comparison of support prior to budget cuts and the more current situation. Of significance was the quality of relationships between foster carers and social workers which was linked to the knowledge and skill set of social workers that families were able to draw on, and the availability of clinical support for more challenging situations. Some families formed their own support groups or requested the development of such groups.

Conclusion: Using Jordan as a case example in introducing foster care in a developing-economy context with

particular cultural challenges, findings not only elucidate the importance of addressing structures that perpetuate barriers to deinstitutionalization, but they also provide important considerations for potentially more cost-effective types of supports that constitute good family-based placements, which is the aim of deisntitutionalization.

What contributes to a good foster care placement – Representations about family foster care: perceived facilitators and barriers

Dr. Catarina Anjos (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisboa, Portugal), Dr. Eunice Magalhães (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), CIS-IUL, Lisboa, Portugal), Ms. Vania Salvador Pinto (University of Oxford), Dr. João Graça (ICS)

Recruiting foster families that are competent, motivated to care for foster children, and who have adequate relationships with different elements of the foster care system (biological family, social workers and other professionals) is a current huge challenge. To recruit and retain these foster families, it is crucial to identify what kind of facilitators and barriers are recognized as well as the representations about foster families.

A convenient sample of 716 Portuguese adults (78% female), aged from 18 to 76 years old (*M*=32.15; *SD*= 12.44) participated in this study. Most of these participants are single (67%), and 33.5% have children. A set of sociodemographic data was filled out by these community sample as well as a task of free evocation with open questions: a) “foster families make me think, feel or imagine…”; b) “please, indicate the main reasons or events that could lead you to be a foster family”; c) “please, indicate the main reasons or events that could prevent you to be a foster family”.

Results indicated that perceived facilitators are mainly focused on the children/young people to be fostered and may also be related to the foster families or even to the community factors. On the other hand, the perceived barriers seem to be related to the foster families themselves, to the fostered children/young people or to the fostering process itself. These findings provide important implications for professional practices, namely, the recruitment and selection of new foster families.

What contributes to a good foster care placement?

Ms. Vania Salvador Pinto (oxf), Dr. Ellie Ott (Rees)

Children's social care services have the duty of care for children. In some cases, they need to intervene and support the removal of children who are abused or/and neglected within their family environment. This intervention has in its core the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, however, in practice each children's social care system has been following the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children in a slightly different way, which is reflected in the different usage of foster care. In this symposium different approaches to promote foster care and children and young people's outcomes are presented. Rooted in these presentations are ideas from the literature about the perspectives of children in wanting normality and belonging in family-care, as replicated in foster care.

The first study was conducted in Portugal, a country where foster care is barely used. It examines the representations of foster families, and the facilitators and barriers to become a foster family from the perspective of 716 adults of the general population. The second study provides a case example of deinstitutionalising children within a culturally conservative and a developing-economy context with fluctuating budgets. Insights that contribute to good placements within these challenging dynamics are drawn from focus groups and semi-structured interviews with foster carers and key stakeholders. The third is a mixed-methods study conducted in England and in Portugal - two systems with different usage but with similar legislative definitions of foster care. This study involved the self-assessment of 905 foster carers on their parenting and professional skills, and the views of 7 young people in care and 10 young adults who were care experienced on what constitutes a good foster care placement. The fourth study presents an evaluation of the Mockingbird Family Model of foster care in the English context, where foster care is widely used in comparison with residential care. Administrative data is presented alongside data from interviews with 36 children and young people, 43 foster carers, and 38 staff members. The final study took place in Australia, which has a children's social care system highly focused on foster care. Data from a two-phased qualitative study, examining the perspectives 153 practitioners on placement decision making, is presented.

The speakers will reflect on foster care placements as a type of placement that can contribute to ensure children's rights on these different children's social care systems, aligned with the 2019 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Rights of the Child - focus on children without parental care. These studies intend to contribute to knowledge by developing research that can support country-level policy decisions.

List of individual contributions

Representations about family foster care: perceived facilitators and barriers.
Catarina Anjos and Eunice Magalhães, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisboa, Portugal
Vânia S. Pinto, Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford, UK
João Graça, Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal
Lessons Learned to Deinstitutionalize Children in Developing Economy Contexts: Foster Care in Jordan.
Rawan W. Ibrahim, Department of Social Work, German Jordanian University, Jordan
Lisa Holmes, Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford, UK
Foster carers as parents or professionals: The fostering role in England and Portugal.
Vânia S. Pinto, Judy Sebba, and Neil Harrison, Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford, UK
An evaluation of the Mockingbird programme of foster care.
Ellie Ott (Centre for Evidence and Implementation), Vânia S. Pinto, David Sanders-Ellis, and Helen Trivedi, Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford, UK
Factors contributing to optimal placement decision making in the Australian context.
Jenna Meiksans, Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia, Australia

What contributes to a good foster care placement? - Foster carers as parents or professionals: The role of foster carers in England and Portugal

Ms. Vania Salvador Pinto (oxf), Prof. Judy Sebba (Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education, University of Oxford), Dr. Neil Harrison (Unive)

Background: Foster care is based on the principle that children who have been removed from their families have the right to live in an alternative family. Therefore, foster carers can be considered as providing parental care. Nonetheless, the role of foster carers is also comprised of some additional tasks beyond the ones performed by parents, such as supporting children with specific needs, promoting the relationship between children and their families, and working with the fostering services. Fostering services, and more specifically social workers have the crucial task of selecting the most suitable people to perform this complex role. However, in several countries, standardised tools are not used to support the selection process of new foster carers.

Objective: This presentation aims to explore the psychometric properties of the Casey Foster Applicant Inventory - Applicant Version (CFAI-A) with an English and a Portuguese sample. The CFAI-A is an American self-assessment questionnaire, designed to measure the skills of foster carers' applicants thought to be linked to the fostering potential. It is also aimed to analyse how this questionnaire is aligned with the views of young people in care and young adults who are care experienced on what constitutes a good foster care placement.

Methods: This is part of a larger project which follows a mixed-methods sequential exploratory design. A total of 905 foster carers filled in the CFAI-A, more specifically 833 in England, through a non-probability convenience sampling method, and 72 in Portugal, through a total population, non-probability sampling method. Rasch models were used to assess the psychometric properties of the CFAI-A. Five focus groups were also conducted, two in Portugal and three in England, with a total of 7 young people in care and 10 young adults who are care experienced. Content analysis was used to explore the perspectives of these participants.

Results: The role of foster carers was understood as composed of two scales, one measuring the professional domain, and the other measuring the parenting domain. Interestingly, young people and young adults considered that the parenting domain should be at the core of the role of foster carers. However, they also acknowledged some aspects of the professional domain as particularly important, such as supporting children given their individual needs, and supporting the relationship between children and their families.

Conclusions: In conclusion, the role of foster carers can be classified as parenting with additional tasks. This research contributes to the understanding of relevant characteristics for the role of foster carers in different cultural contexts through the use of a standardised questionnaire. The acquired knowledge can contribute to the selection process of foster carers in England and Portugal.

Keywords: Foster care, selection process, parenting role, professional role

What contributes to a good foster care placement? – An evaluation of the Mockingbird programme of foster care

Dr. Ellie Ott (Centre for Evidence and Implementation), Ms. Vania Pinto (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Mr. David Sanders-Ellis (Rees Centre, University of Oxford), Ms. Helen Trivedi (Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

Fostering agencies face challenges in improving the outcomes and wellbeing of children and young people in care, decreasing placement disruptions, and increasing the retention of foster carers. Mockingbird is a model of foster care that aims to improve foster care and the outcomes and wellbeing of children and young people in care by replicating the support available through an extended family network. It creates a constellation of 6-10 satellite fostering families who are supported by one hub home that is operated by an experienced foster carer, offering planned and emergency sleepovers, social activities, training, and peer support.The Mockingbird Family Model was developed in the USA by The Mockingbird Society and replicated in the UK by The Fostering Network, creating the 'Mockingbird programme.'

This presentation presents findings from a large evaluation of the model in 10 local authorities and 2 independent fostering agencies in England funded through the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme (2017-2020). The quasi-experimental evaluation used three years of administrative data to create comparison groups and examine the impact of the programme on placement stability and foster carer retention. It also examined outcomes over time with surveys at two-time points, including examining the wellbeing of children and young people and satisfaction with the amount of time spent with siblings. Implementation analysis included reviewing documentation and participation data along with 122 individual interviews with children and young people, foster carers, fostering agency site staff, and The Fostering Network staff at two time points, transcribed and analysed using a thematic framework analysis in NVivo12.

The Mockingbird programme is grounded in four theories around the perspectives of children in care and foster carers on what makes good foster care that is reflected in the evaluation. First, there is the importance of peer support for foster carers theorised to be a non-judgemental way of gaining help that improves foster carer wellbeing, satisfaction, respect, retention, and thus placement stability. A review of the international literature on foster carer peer support by the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford identified The Mockingbird Programme as a promising model of foster carer peer support (Luke & Sebba, 2013). Second, the programme is underpinned by the idea of improving relationships, particularly between foster carers and their children, through the importance of shared activities (Gilligan, 2009; Wade et al, 2012). Third, underlying the programme is the idea of expanding the social networks for both foster carers and children, with social networks being positively associated with placement stability (Sinclair et al, 2007). Lastly, underpinning all of the activities and the language in Mockingbird is an overarching theory on the importance of high standards of 'ordinary' foster care and of normalising care.

Mockingbird was found to be a promising model of foster care with children and young people reporting strong friendships, social networks, support, and wellbeing. Mockingbird supported sibling relationships in care and continuity in transition, although it was not clear what impact the model had on placement disruption. Compared to other fostering households, foster carers in Mockingbird were less likely to stop fostering ($p<0.001$) and less likely to have unavailable places ($p=0.03$). Being part of a Mockingbird constellation was associated with greater satisfaction with sleepover arrangements and support.

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What factors predispose the intention of becoming a foster family? The case of Estonia

Ms. Madli Raudkivi (Tallinn University)

It is well documented, that growing up in a foster family is one of the best options for children who cannot do that safely with their biological parents. Yet, finding and recruiting new foster families have become more difficult all over the world. It could be assumed that it is even more difficult in countries like Estonia (similary to many other post-soviet societies), where the tradition of foster care is short compared to the long history of institutional child care. At the moment social campaigns are trying to raise awareness and find families who would be ready to become foster families, but there haven't been a rise in the small amount of foster families in Estonia. The aim of the study which I wish to present is to analyze and compare the role of these attitudes, beliefs and background factors in explaining the intention of becoming a foster parent in Estonia.

Becoming a foster family could be viewed as a decision to engage in a specific behavior because it would entail several changes to everyday life. One explanation is through attitudes and beliefs, as argued by Ajzen & Fishbein (2005) in their reasoned action and planned behaviour approach. According to them behavior could be predicted through intentions which are influenced by three kinds of factors – attitudes towards the behavior, what close persons like your family and friends think about the behavior and the perceived behavioral control also known as presence or absence of requisite resources and opportunities to behave in a planned way. In addition to the beliefs, also cultural, personal and situational factors are claimed to influence the people's behavior and are analyzed in the study (e.g age, income level, education level, marital status. ethnicity etc.) as control variables. Also the generational and ethnical gaps in attitudes towards foster families are explored. Regaining independence in 1991 (and social changes some years before) had an big impact on people and may have impacted people in different ways.

The results of the quantitative research shows that attitudes like positive stance towards foster families and perceived support from close relatives are two strong predictors of an intention of becoming a foster parent as well as some demographic variables like age, ethnicity and the presence of children in the family. The data also shows a possible gap between generations and ethnicities. The results show somewhat low awareness and knowledge about the foster family concept. It means that recruiting new families and normalizing the concept of being a foster family could take a lot of time and effort because positive attitudes and higher awareness have to be established for families to decide to become foster parents.

What is a successful boarding school? an insider perspective.

Dr. MAYA BOTVIN (Tel Aviv University; Israeli Ministry of Education)

Learning from successes is a collective name for learning processes among learning communities or individuals while examining the activities that led to success and turning them into courses of action that will enable success in the future. This study focuses on an insider perspective on what is a successful boarding school.

This study aims to **describe the characteristics of a successful youth village boarding school from an insider perspective.**The current study is based on 77 in-depth interviews with supervisors, principals, educational-therapeutic staff, 24 Focus groups with volunteers and students, and 160 Participatory observations conducted over two years. The study proposes a heuristic model that describes a successful boarding school and can serve as a learning base.

Three central themes emerged from the participants' data about the residential facilities' success: **a sense of belonging, significant staff,**and**unique local component.**

The findings of this study turned tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. A heuristic model is developed based on the data, presenting the supervisors, principals, and staff's working methods that help them become significant figures and create a student's sense of belonging.

This study has a potential theoretical and practical contribution to make. The study and the models developed from the findings provide a central, essential basis for those involved in building long-term educational strategies, training, and professional development for principals and staff and developing educational programs. Moreover, learning from successful education facilities may lead to positive change in this area's educational discourse. It may generate optimism and enthusiasm among those involved in this task, which is essential for educating young people at risk and preparing them for independent living.

What is happening during Home Visits? – Children's perspective.

Ms. Marina Wetzel (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW))

Home-based family services (known in Switzerland as social pedagogical family support [SPF]) have existed in Switzerland since the 1980s. SPF is the most frequently used home-based family service of the Swiss child welfare system. This service is characterized by its approach of providing the service to families in their own homes. This gives the opportunity for more whole-family involvement and individual attention to all family members, including the children. The main goal is to support families in developing and implementing new strategies for coping with challenging situations and ensuring the child's well-being.
While research has documented children's participation and cooperation in home visiting program as a prerequisite for effectiveness, little is known about how children are explicitly taken into account during the interventions. Moreover, there is a lack of research concerning children's perceptions of home visits. We conducted 19 interviews with children aged between 6 and 12 years out of 16 families to address this research gap. The families included in the study were recruited from five different services from diverse regions of the German-speaking part of Switzerland. These interviews are part of the research project "Impact and Impact Factors of Social Pedagogical Family Work" carried out from 2017 until 2020 at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW). In this study, we examined with a multi-perspective case analysis, the impact of social pedagogical family support in n=16 families using case file analysis, ethnographic observations and interviews with parents, social pedagogues, and the children. We examined the children's perceptions with child-friendly interview techniques directly after ethnographic observations of the home visits. With this strategy, we wanted to ensure a common frame of reference between the interviewer and the child. Beginning with questions on 'shared' experiences during the observed intervention, we ask the children what they do in general during home visits. Further on, we asked what they like or dislike, what they may learn regarding the interventions. We also wanted to find out what children know and think about their family's problems and needs related to the home visit service.

In this presentation, I present findings on children's perceptions of home visits. The results show that the children's experience varies and depends on how intensively children get involved during the interventions. It is worthy to note that the intervention setting essentially affects children's experience. For example, playing with children during home visits seems to be the most important building block whenever the aim is to enter into a true partnership with them. In contrast, most children did not enjoy the home visit or experienced it as boring when professionals did not apply pedagogical approaches in their interactions with the children or merely wanted to talk with them.

Finally, I outline how children perceive the problems in their family and needs related to social pedagogical family support, and their rating regarding the benefit of the home visit service.

What matters to children living in kinship care? How the perspectives of the child can help us frame the debates.

Dr. Paul Shuttleworth (University of Sussex)

Background: Kinship care is the long-term caring arrangement within a family for children who cannot remain with their birth parents. Despite it being the most prevalent alternative care arrangement for children throughout the world, there is a lack of research into kinship care, and even less that focus on the perspectives of the child. These children often have similar losses, attachment difficulties, and needs as others that have experienced abuse and neglect. Additionally, they must manage complex dislocated family relationships, and most live in financial hardship with very little support.

The little kinship care research that has been done reflects a preoccupation with comparing kinship care as an alternative to state care rather than a family set-up within its own right. This typically produces a range of atheoretical, descriptive outcome studies, that often provide conflicting answers by focussing on the 'what' rather than the 'how'. This can cause ambivalence for practitioners, academics, and policy-makers, especially within current debates regarding the role of safeguarding, permanence, evidenced-based practice vs relationship-based practice, risks vs rights, and the role social work and state intervention.

Objective: This is one of the first studies that has solely sought the views of children in kinship care. It explores the lived experiences of children in such arrangements. Another primary aim was to give critical insight into whether there are differences between the prevailing adult and professional views, and children's views of kinship care. Do what we think matters to children, really matter to them?

Method: The study's innovative approach utilises critical realism as an underlabourer, and Sayer's (2011) work on reasoning in particular. By using a dialogical participative approach, different methods such as child-led tours, photo-elicitation, and visual methods were used to capture the children's valuations of their lives. This provided empirical certainty with an interpretivist awareness of subjectivities.

Results: The study found that by using a range of methods, children are competent in giving nuanced, and sophisticated understandings of their own experiences, needs, and intentions. They show that they do not think in terms of binaries but navigate the 'in-between spaces' of their interdependent relationships with their families and the wider world. As such, they challenge the simplistic notions of family, home, contact, permanence, empowerment, agency, and participation that are often used in policy and social work practice. They show how they and their families 'do' kinship care as a family practice, rather than as a placement option.

Conclusions/Implications: By providing a space for meaningful dialogue with children, as well as recognising their interdependence and their' struggles for recognition' (Honneth, 1996), we can help deliver a model of value-based working that navigates responsibility and duty. This applies not only to areas such as kinship care but also reinforces to the need for child care professionals to continue with relationship-based practice, focussing on a sense of permanence, and a sense of safe connection with others. It shows how policy, regulation, and legal processes, must preserve these first and foremost.

What works in Therapeutic Residential Care: Messages from research - The CARE Program Model: What We've Learned

Mrs. Martha Holden (RCCP/Cornell University)

If children are to thrive, they need to have predictable, engaging, responsive, compassionate, secure, purposeful, and stimulating experiences on an ongoing basis. This enormous challenge can be accomplished in therapeutic residential care by creating a culture and living environment that provides developmentally enriching relationships and experiences and a "sense of normality" (Anglin, 2002; Li & Julian, 2012). *Children and Residential Experiences (CARE): Creating Conditions for Change* is designed to accomplish this task. By incorporating six evidence-informed principles (developmentally-focused, family-involved, relationship-based, competency-centered, trauma-informed, and ecologically-oriented) and three key processes (reflective practice, data-informed decision-making, and participatory management) throughout all levels of the organization and into daily practice, an ethos develops that supports and expects developmental relationships in a trauma-sensitive environment (Holden, 2009; Holden & Sellers, 2019).

The CARE principles serve as an organizing framework that enables the organization to realign or reallocate resources, to set priorities, and to create a culture that helps children grow and develop through enhanced interactions focused on strengthening attachments and relationships, building competencies, adjusting expectations to account for children's developmental stage and trauma history, involving families in the child's care and treatment, and enriching dimensions of the environment to create a more therapeutic milieu. In addition, these six CARE principles support a theory of change (TOC) which outlines the causal pathways by which CARE is expected to improve socio-emotional and developmental outcomes for children. The TOC also guides evaluation efforts.

This presentation will present the latest research findings from the ongoing comprehensive evaluation of the CARE Model. A growing body of evidence supports the effectiveness of the CARE program model, a fact that is acknowledged in the scientific rating of 3 (promising research evidence) for CARE in the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/children-and-residential-experiences-care/detailed), where CARE is listed under both the Higher Levels of Placement and the Alternatives to Long-Term Residential Programs topics. A 5-year quasi-experimental evaluation included examination of the impact of CARE on staff knowledge and beliefs, adult–child interactions and relationships, and child behavior (Izzo et al., 2016) in 13 agencies in North Carolina. In addition, a single agency interrupted time series used 12 years of data to examine the impact of CARE implementation on restraint rates (Nunno et al., 2017) and the use of psychometric medication.

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What works in Therapeutic Residential Care: Messages from research-Young people in Therapeutic Residential Care: analyzing specific needs from a gender perspective

Prof. Eduardo Martin (University of La Laguna), Mrs. Alba Águila-Otero (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo), Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo)

Background:
According to Spanish national statistics 49,985 children and adolescents were in out-of-home care in 2018. Just over a half (52%) was in residential child care (Observatorio de la infancia, 2019), with 63% over 15, because the youngest are usually placed in family foster care, especially kinship care. There were 1,104 residential child care facilities in Spain, of which 86 were TRCs, with a total of 937 places for young people with serious emotional or behavioural problems. Therapeutic Residential Care (TRC) programs have been created to address child care requiring specialized therapeutic intervention that cannot be undertaken from a family context or other residential placements. There is scarce research on this type of specialized programs in Spain, especially from a gender perspective. The objective of this study is to analyse the specific profile of girls on TRC.
Method:
Sample: the sample is made up of 310 young people in TRC, aged between 11 and 18 (Mean: 15.6; Standard deviation: 1.3). Nearly 80% of young people are over 15. Regarding gender, 207 are boys (66.8%) and 103 girls (33.2%).
Instruments:

- Youth Self Report (YSR). This test is part of ASEBA system (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001), and give eight specific clinical subscales and three second-order scales: internalizing, externalizing and total.
- Personal Well-being Index (PWI) (Cummins, 2005). This questionnaire measures wellbeing in eleven domains as well as a global index.
- Sociodemographic data and risk behaviour variables were extracted from the local authority files.

Procedure:
The study complied with all of the ethical requirements in the 1964 Helsinki Declaration referring to research with human beings. The researchers sought and obtained the appropriate permissions from the public administrations which are the guardians of each young person. Young people were organized into small groups to complete their questionnaires, supervised by the researchers. Other information was collected by researchers from the administrative files.
Data analysis:
Bivariate analyses were performed using the chi square statistic.
Results:
The results of YSR showed higher percentages of girls scoring above the clinical range on specifics scales of anxiety depression and social problems, and also on the three second order scales: internalizing, externalizing and total.
Regarding PWI, the results showed lower scores on personal wellbeing in the domains of family, standard of living, things achieved, feeling of safety, future security, the body and global life.
While the boys showed high levels of violent behaviour and judicial measures, girls showed high levels of cocaine abuse, sexual risk behaviours and runaway from family home (previous entry to child care system).
Discussion and conclusion:

Girls exhibit a specific and complex profile of psychological distress, sexual risk behaviour and specific mental health needs. A gender perspective for the intervention must be adopted in order to develop a more individualized therapeutic intervention in TRC.

What works in Therapeutic Residential Care? Messages from research

Prof. Jorge Fernández del Valle (University of Oviedo), Prof. Amaia Bravo Arteaga (University of Oviedo)

Therapeutic residential care is an intervention that has been defined by Whittaker et al. (2015) as the planful use of a purposefully constructed, multi-dimensional living environment designed to enhance or provide treatment, education, socialization, support, and protection to children and youth with identified mental health or behavioral needs in partnership with their families and in collaboration with a full spectrum of community-based formal and informal helping resources. This specialized program tries to cover the needs of adolescents who, while being protected, present serious emotional and behavioral problems. Therefore, they fulfill a protective function but at the same time an intensive therapeutic intervention is required in a daily life space based on the construction of a therapeutic milieu.

Given the great challenge of working in groups with young people with serious behavioral problems, this type of intervention is required to be based on research that supports them. The evidence-based programs meet this requirement of empirical demonstration of results, although in the field of therapeutic residential we are still in a phase of promising programs and research development.

This symposium tries to gather a set of investigations that present empirical results on the practice and results of TRC programs so that conclusions can be drawn for the improvement of this type of interventions.

On the one hand, two specific programs will be approached that already have years of experience and that are able to assess their contributions, trying to find out what are the components of their interventions that are related to success. M. Holden will present results of the application of the CARE program in the USA and C. Cresswell and L. Holmes will present results of the No Wrong Door program in the UK. On the other hand, two more research pieces will show results about TRC programs in Spain. E. Martin and cols. will show an analysis of young people profiles from a gender perspective and A. Águila-Otero and cols. will present an analysis of the therapeutic components in a sample of TRC programs.

Tha main objective of this Symposium is to discuss the development of TRC programs, both in terms of results of consolidated intervention and in a more exploratory perspective about young people needs and components of TRC.

The list of contributions of this symposium is as follows:

The CARE program model: What We've Learned.

M. Holden.

Innovative residential care for adolescents in England: Learning from No Wrong Door

C. Cresswell and L. Holmes

Young people in Therapeutic Residential Care: analysing specific needs from a gender perspective

E. Martin, Águila-Otero, A., Bravo, A. & Del Valle, J.F.

Exploring therapeutic components in a sample of therapeutic residential care facilities in Spain

Águila-Otero, A., Santos, I., Bravo, A. & Del Valle, J.F.

Which future for children from care? Dreams and fears regarding the future of (former) children in care in Switzerland and Hungary

Mrs. Clara Bombach (Marie Meierhofer Children's Institute), Dr. Anna Schmid (International Federation of Educative Communities (FICE))

Paper in Symposium: Improving education in child and youth care programs: The perspectives of educators, children in care and graduates.

Recent studies examining the history of residential care in Switzerland until 1990 show that young adults were always expected to leave care into independence and autonomy, while, contradictorily, educational practices were designed to ignore individual needs (see Bombach, Gabriel, Keller 2017; 2018). For a long time, the idea was held that young women who left care were sufficiently educated and prepared for their lives after care by e.g. household and aupair placements in French-speaking Switzerland or by marriage. Young men were trained in manual professions in order to prove themselves capable of living an independent live and, above all, of maintaining themselves financially. Individual development paths, personal career aspirations and higher education were long denied to children in care, in part because they were told that no one expected much from children in care. In biographical-narrative interviews, persons placed in residential care between 1950 and 1990, it express clearly that these low expectations and devaluations left a mark on their entire life course (cf. Bombach, Gabriel, Keller 2018). They report experiences of continuous stigmatization during school and vocational training, resulting in effects felt for many decades after leaving care, such as, for example, poverty in old age.

To this day, a considerable number of young people from youth homes fail to establish a sustainable future for themselves (Burgund & Rácz, 2015; Stein, 2014; Gabriel & Stohler, 2008). In the project “Creating Futures” (2019-2021), Young Experts (aged 14 – 24), staff and leaders from five youth homes in Switzerland and Hungary work together. Their goal: to develop innovations that allow their Homes to promote the self-empowerment of young people more effectively, namely: their ability to take their lives into their own hands and to create and sustainably realise their own ideas of the future (Schmid & Herczeg, 2018). Focus group discussions and a literature review have yielded varying assumptions regarding the goals of youth empowerment, as well as wide range of organisational aspects that influence self-empowerment of young people in care. Selecting some dimensions, each home is identifying its good practices and development potentials and, in the course of 2021, develops and tries out concrete innovations. On the one hand, the Congress contribution will focus on knowledge and innovations produced. On the other hand, it will describe the challenges and benefits of the collaboration of Young Experts, staff and leaders of Homes in a Community of Practice, harnessing their diversity to stimulate innovation, and promoting empowerment at the levels of young people, staff and the entire organisations.

Who are the children placed in out-of-home care for a risk of sexual abuse?

Mrs. Camille Buisson (University of Québec at Trois-Rivières), Dr. Karine Poitras (University of Québec at Trois-Rivières)

Most of the legislation that guides youth protection agencies includes both situation of maltreatment and those where children are at risk of maltreatment. The decision to intervene in a situation of maltreatment or risk of maltreatment can have important implications, such as the placement of children. More specifically, children placed in out-of-home care for sexual abuse or risk of sexual abuse are a source of concern for child welfare services considering their vulnerability, the complexity of their family situations and their need for specialized services. Placement represents an additional adaptative challenge for these vulnerable children. However, little is known about out-of-home placement of children placed for sexual abuse or risk of sexual abuse. In addition, families who put the security and development of children at risk require adequate and needs-oriented services just as urgently as families taken into care for a situation of sexual abuse. Thus, the present study aims to distinguish the child characteristics at initial placement (age, functioning concerns), parental figures concern at initial placement (e.g., domestic violence, mental health issues, alcohol/drug abuse) and placement characteristics (number of moves, number of family reunification) of children at risk of sexual abuse from those who are victims of sexual abuse. To do this, we examined, over a period of 3 to 5 years, 31 cases of children aged from 0 to 12 years old (22 girls, M = 6.2, SD = 4.0) and placed in foster care for a reason of sexual abuse or risk of sexual abuse. Fifteen children are reported for risk of sexual abuse, 16 are reported for sexual abuse and 3 of the 15 children reported for risk were later reported for sexual abuse. T-Test results indicated that children at risk of sexual abuse (*M = 3.78, SD = 3.36*) are significantly younger at initial placement than children reported for sexual abuse (*M = 8.55, SD = 3.14*), *t*(29) = -4.09, *p*< 0.001. Children at risk of sexual abuse (*M = 3.53, SD = 1.13*) also live with parental figures with significantly greater risk factors at initial placement than children reported for sexual abuse (*M = 2.50, SD = 1.37*), *t*(29) = 2.29, *p*< 0.05. Finally, children at risk of sexual abuse (*M = 0.53, SD = 0.64*) experiment less family reunification during the observation period than children reported for sexual abuse (*M = 1.13, SD = 0.81*), *t*(29) = -2.25, *p*< 0.05. No differences were found between children at risk of sexual abuse from those who are victims of sexual abuse for the child functioning concerns and the number of moves. Results support reflections on best practices for adequate and needs-oriented services for these children and their family. A discussion will also provide reflections on the concept of risk in the context of child welfare and the issues of placement instability.

Young adult care leavers in higher education: motives for study choices and resources for study progress

Prof. Veerle Soyez (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Background. International research almost unanimously shows poorer educational outcomes of young people leaving care compared to their majority population peers. Consequently, care leavers are underrepresented in higher education settings in several European countries. The difficulties experienced by this group in transitioning to higher education have shown to be linked with other problems they are confronted with -such as financial problems or a lack of social support- and are already expressed in low educational achievements at earlier stages.

As participating in higher education is a significant element of potentiality for upward social mobility, learning more about the trajectories of care leavers towards and during higher education can offer additional information on how to support this group.

Objectives. The aim of this study is to explore care leavers' *motives* for *entering* higher education as well as the *motives* for their specific *study choice*. Additionally, the lived experiences regarding the trajectories of young adult care leavers in higher education are explored, identifying *potential resources* that contribute to progress in their study trajectories.

Methods.A total of 15 semi-structured qualitative interviews were performed with young people aged 18 to 26. All of them were care leavers and were enrolled in an institution for higher education in Flanders at the moment of the study. A thematic analysis was performed on the data.

Results. Generally, although the care leavers in this study were highly motivated to start a trajectory in higher education, they experienced low aspirations in the people around them, resulting in academic underpreparation.

Twelve of the 15 participants were enrolled in a study preparing to become a health professional, social worker or educator. The motives for this study choice were largely shaped by care leavers' experiences during out-of-home placement. Both positive experiences (support of key figures they considered as role models) and negative experiences (lack of support, leading to a wish to do better for other children in care) were mentioned as important motives. On the other hand, young adults struggled with their 'care leaver' identity : they generally preferred not to reveal about their past.

Conclusions. Relevant stakeholders should consider means for directing and engaging care leavers in thinking about their future higher education, as higher education is a key to success later in life. Also during higher education processes they can offer relevant support.

(Remark: data for this study were recently collected – additional analyses and conclusions will be presented on the poster)

Young people leaving care highlight significant adults met before and during their child protection trajectory

Prof. Bernadette Tillard (Univ. Lille, CNRS, UMR 8019 - CLERSE - Centre Lillois d'Études et de Recherches Sociologiques et économiques, F-59000 Lille), Mrs. Lucy Marquet (Univ. Lille, CNRS, UMR 8019 - CLERSE - Centre Lillois d'Études et de Recherches Sociologiques et économiques, F-59000 Lille), Mrs. Isabelle Frechon (Université Versailles-Saint-Quentin/Paris Saclay)

Objective

Through questionnaires and interviews with the 17-year-olds in care, young people explained who are the adults they considered as significant in their life course. How did these people mobilize themselves during their childhood? How did their involvement relate to the action of child protection professionals?

Method

The longitudinal study on young people in leaving care (ELAP – french acronym) aims to better knowledge about young people in child protection care between 17 and 20 years old. It includes several data collection components:

- A first wave (V1) of survey conducted in 2013-2014 produced representative results from a sample of 1,622 young people in care between the ages of 17 and 20 in 7 departments of two major French regions.
- A second wave (V2) of survey was carried out 18 months after V1 with a sub-sample including all young people who were 17 years old in V1.
- These two waves of quantitative survey were extended by a qualitative research with interviews with around 100 young people.

Funding and implementation: This project is carried out in partnership between the Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (UR6 Mobility, Housing and Entourage) and the Laboratoire Printemps (UVSQ UMR 8085) as part of an ANR programme INEG 2012, supplemented by several sources of funding (DREES, DGCS, ONED, AnMecs, Fondation Grancher, INED). The INED's investigation and legal departments supported it.

Results

« Apart from your parents (biological or adoptive) are there people who have acted as parents to you? ». Several questions followed on "significant persons", their sex, their relationship with the young person, the cohabitation period, their current residence and the persistence of contact.

- Among 17-year-olds, more than 36% did not cite any adults who had played a parental role outside their own parents.
- About one-third cited an adult in the sphere of close relatives (family, friends, neighbours, godparents, etc.).
- The last third is divided between young people who cited adults met in child protection (27%; educators, foster family members, social workers, residential care staff, etc.) and citing both professionals and relatives (5%).

Of the 193 young people who cited a parental figure from their close relatives, 127 lived with him/her. These 127 young people represent nearly one-quarter of the sample. This proportion is the same for girls and boys. It is slightly higher for foreign-born minors not recognized as "Unaccompanied Minors (UM)" (36%).

Among 100 interviews conducted, 32 interviews meet our criteria: a young minor staying for a more or less long period with relatives or with a member of his/her entourage whom he/she declares to have played a parental role for him/her.

The analysis of pathways distinguishes four types of situation before 18 years.

1 - Minors born abroad, entrusted to their wide family before leaving their country. In France, alone in the street, he/she got the statute of "unaccompanied minor"

2 - Foreign-born minor entrusted in France to related compatriots before a disruption of links between young people and his/her relatives

3 - Minors born in France, with brief links with the entourage during a long course in child protection
4 - Minors born in France with a long involvement of their family and friends beyond 18.

Conclusions

From the Longitudinal Study on the Young People Leaving Care, we examine how supports from the entourage and those provided by the professionals are combined in life course of young people in child protection at 17 years. In three of the four profiles, substitution of professional support to family and friends involvement prevails on complementarity of supports to the child.

Young Refugees as Designer of social Relations - Shaping social relations by interpreting. A biographical perspective on child language-brokering.

Dr. Nadja Thoma (University of Vienna)

The paper at hand aims at exploring how students actively shape social relations by interpreting. Theoretically, I draw on the concept of language brokering, a practice engaged in by many immigrant youth who interpret languages for others. Child language brokering is a part of everyday life in schools, residential care settings, hospitals, and governmental agencies, and can be seen as part of "non-normative" childhood experiences that diverge from what "Western", middle-class children are expected to do (Faulstich Orellana and Phoenix 2017). At the same time, language brokering can be defined as part of the practice of active citizenship (Bauer 2010). Since children often have better linguistic competences in the dominant language of the migration society than their parents, the roles within the intergenerational relationships between children and adults are changed which can lead to challenging situations that they (must) deal with.

The paper is based on a research project on experiences of refugee students in Austria (funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, and completed in December 2019). The main objective of the project was to explore the experiences that refugee students make during the process of their arrival in a new society and educational system. More concretely, the research interest was on the narrations of students, their communication in a multilingual context, their practices of translation, and how they managed to mutually mediate their experiences. The perspectives of children and youth stayed at the center in two ways: as narrators, they had the opportunity to tell their experiences and reflect about them with peers and researchers (as well as *not* to tell experiences), and as co-researchers of a participatory research project (Unger 2014), they were actively involved in the research process at several stages.

In order to reconstruct the meanings that language brokering has for young people, small stories (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) and biographical interviews (Schütze 1983) were collected and analyzed combining biographical analysis (Rosenthal 2004) with Ground Theory Methodology (Charmaz 2006). Since refugee students are potentially a very vulnerable group, a special focus was placed on questions of research ethics (Unger 2018). The results show that students use interpreting not only in the sense of translating content from one linguistic system to another. Rather, they make use of their agency, they take part in decision-making processes with regard to questions of education, health and family, and they position themselves as powerful interpreters in sometimes complex situations. Thus, by using the practice of language brokering, children and youth actively shape social relationships and advocate their position in the migration society. At the end of the paper, implications for schools, school social work and youth welfare will be discussed.

Youth care compared: perceived safety and social cohesion explain differences in youth care use between similar neighbourhoods

Dr. Cathelijne Mieloo (The Hague University of Applied Sciences), Mrs. Ingrid Ooms (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research), Mr. Roelof Schellingerhout (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research), Dr. Wouter Reith (The Hague University of Applied Sciences), Dr. Rob Gilsing (The Hague University of Applied Scienes)

Introduction

The youth in the Netherlands is one of the most happiest youth in the world. However, the use of youth care in the Netherlands is high, with more than 8% of the children from 0-23 years old receiving care, and this amount is still growing. Youth care in the Netherlands consist of ambulant as well as residential child welfare and psychiatric youth care. Large differences exist in the use of youth care between regions in the Netherlands. For instance in The Hague more than 10% of the children receive youth care, while in a municipality nearby 6,5 % of the children receive youth care. Risk factors as poverty, having a migration background or growing up in a single parent family may predict the use of youth care. Therefore, differences between municipalities are explainable. However, differences in youth care usage between similar neighbourhoods cannot be explained by the presence of these risk factors.

Aim and methods

The aim of this study was to explain differences between predicted and actual use of youth care between similar neighbourhoods. First, we built a multilevel model to predict the use of youth care based on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of neighbourhoods, e.g. mean income level, percentage of single parent families. Second, we compared predicted youth care usage with actual youth care usage in neighbourhoods of the The Hague area. Third, for further explanation of differences between neighbourhoods, we expanded the models with neighbourhood information from surveys about feelings of social cohesion, feelings of safety, and information about the presence of facilities and occupancy. These quantitative insights were used as input for focus groups. We have organised focus groups in neighbourhoods similar in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, but with different deviations from predicted use of youth care. These focus groups consisted of welfare organisations, youth care organisations, general practitioners, district police, policy officers and inhabitants. The aim of the focus groups was to discover additional explanations for differences among neighbourhoods and discuss ways for improvement of youth care usage.

Results

As expected the use of youth care is related to demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the population. The use of youth care can be predicted by family composition, use of social assistance benefits, use of special education and presence of non-Western immigrants. Predicted youth care usage based on demographic and socioeconomic neighbourhood characteristics resembles actual use of youth care. Therefore our model predicts relatively well the use of youth care. However, in some districts and neighbourhoods the actual use of youth care appeared higher or lower as expected based on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Factors as perceived safety, social cohesion and presence of facilities are correlated to the deviation between actual and predicted use of youth care.

Conclusions

Youth care use in neighbourhoods with stronger social cohesion and higher perceived safety among inhabitants is lower even when corrected for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Therewith, our research supports the importance of social cohesion. This can be promoted by stimulating the pedagogical civil society. An environment in which formal and informal connections, relevant for parenting and growing up, are highly developed and work well together, can strengthen these social connections.

In the presentation we will present our results from the quantitative analyses as well as from the focus groups. We will show the added value of focus groups in predicting and understanding youth care usage and the lessons we have learned to improve youth care on neighbourhood level.

Youth Centered Integrated Approach - a therapeutic community framework for strengthening young lives & building positive outcomes in residential care.

Dr. Deborah Judge (Birribi - Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist), Mr. Steve Cansdale (Birribi - Family and Systemic Psychotherapist), Mrs. Lisa Mellen (Birribi - Therapeutic Team Manager)

Summary and Themes:

- **Residential Child Care**
- **Therapeutic community ethos**

- **Embedding Trauma Informed Practice**
- **Attachment focused, relationship centred**
- **Multi-systemic approach, strengths-based, outcomes focused**
- **Voices of the young people shaping their goals and aspirations.**

Aims and objectives

Birribi is an innovative therapeutic residential care organisation working with high-risk young people in West Wales. We have developed a therapeutic community focused, systemic approach, the Youth Centred Integrated Approach, (YCIA), which has been embedded into day-to-day residential care practice.

In times of austerity, we believe that bold approaches are needed to implement effective systemic practice in the residential care sector, creating a future focused vision and implementing positive change through ‘doing something new’.

The Approach and embedded theories/models

Birribi’s aim is to deliver an effective therapeutic approach for children with complex needs and childhood experiences of severe adversity. Alongside integrated education provision the model also incorporates therapy planning based on models working with childhood trauma, the importance of family and other attachment relationships and social learning, all underpinned by a therapeutic community framework.

The Therapeutic Community framework highlights the importance of healthy attachments in safe and supportive environments. It focuses on young people being respected and valued and aims to involve young people in active planning for their own futures. It creates the sense of belonging through prioritising positive, empowering relationships and facilitating spaces where every young person’s voice is valued and heard, e.g. through weekly community home meetings.

Evaluation and outcomes

Birribi’s YCIA approach invests quality training into the care workforce, who are known as Therapeutic Coaches and provides them with the tools and understanding to make every interaction with a young person a possible therapeutic intervention.

Ongoing evaluation of the YCIA and data analysis for research projects is being collected through the outcome measurement tool, the ‘Outcome Star’. Therapeutic coaches work with the young people to consider and rate their journeys of acquiring skills, abilities and knowledge and setting achievable goals.

Our presentation describes the development of Birribi as a therapeutic residential care organisation and the creation of the Youth Centred Integrated therapeutic approach, setting the overarching framework in a Therapeutic Community model. This approach embeds trauma-informed practice alongside attachment frameworks and family focused work, where possible, to enable young people to shape and achieve their goals. We will present data from the Outcomes Star measurement of progress and change towards building resilience and achieving goals.

We suggest that despite current restraints in the economic–political landscape, innovation and change is possible through creating new ways of working. The importance of an integrated and systemic approach means that there is less reliance on ‘experts working in silos’ and more focus on collaborative co-working and planning. The therapeutic coaches are central to creating daily therapeutic relationships centred within a community ethos which enables so much of the important change for looked after children.

Conclusions

Birribi believes that its innovative therapeutic care approach will inspire and motivate significant changes for looked after children from the grass roots up. It demonstrates how looked after children’s complex needs and backgrounds of severe adversity can be transformed, and new narratives, skills and opportunities discovered and co-created.

Birribi’s vision is to motivate and inspire positive change that enables other organisations to creatively change the way they work. By increasing collaboration and demonstrating a whole-systems community centred approach – we create new opportunities for the future landscape of practice.

Birribi believes it is imperative that systemic practitioners and innovative organisations act now to reshape the landscape of residential care practice into the future.

Youth Response to the Need for Housing and its Constraints – Family Unification Program Vouchers for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Dr. Sarah Prendergast (Urban Institute), Dr. Michael Pergamit (Urban Institute), Ms. Amelia Coffey (Urban Institute)

Session Chair: Bridgette Lery

Background and Objectives: Youth who age out of foster care are at high risk of homelessness. By age 23/24, 29% of youth who age out have been homeless; most experienced homelessness relatively soon after exiting care (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010). To support youth during the transition from care, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development (HUD) provides housing vouchers through its Family Unification Program (FUP). Originally used for homeless families at risk of having a child removed or delay in reunification due to its housing situation, eligibility was expanded to youth aging out of care. While the vouchers provide a permanent subsidy to families, youth may only use the voucher for up to 3 years. A previous study found that a minority of public housing agencies (PHAs) award FUP vouchers to youth, and youth constituted only about 14 percent of all FUP program participants (Dion et al. 2014). Since that study, several changes have occurred in the FUP program and in foster care provision in the United States. The maximum age of FUP youth eligibility increased from 21 to 24; the length of time FUP can be used by youth increased from 18 to 36 months; the Continuum of Care (which organizes the homelessness service system) became a required partner in the local FUP program, to aid identification of eligible youth no longer in care; many more states have extended foster care to age 21; and states with extended foster care can now use of Chafee funds to support youth to age 23. This study builds on the prior research by documenting implementation practices among recent FUP grantees, given these significant changes.

Method: The study data collection consists of a web-based survey of FUP liaisons at PHAs, PCWAs and CoCs; focus groups with youth; interviews and focus groups with staff; and administrative data collection. We are collecting information on implementation across sites, how FUP is used to serve youth on the ground, how eligible youth are identified and referred for FUP, barriers to youth to obtain a FUP voucher or leasing-up into housing, and aspects of how the program operates. A key contribution will come from focus groups with youth to incorporate youth voices into understanding how they experience the program.

Major research questions include: (1) Which youth are targeted by the PCWA and Continuum of Care for FUP? How are eligible youth identified? How are partners prioritizing youth for referrals? (2) What are the barriers and facilitators to a youth signing a lease and maintaining their housing? How do the needs and success of parenting youth in the program differ from childless youth? (3) What types of services are provided along with the FUP housing subsidy? (4) How does context shape the FUP program in each site: extended foster care; the local housing market, economy, and service environment; and regulatory and statutory barriers? (5) How do youth experience FUP?

Results and Conclusions:FUP has the potential to help youth transition successfully out of foster care by providing housing and services. But whether it is successful at improving the long-term outcomes for youth remains to be seen. This study will shed light on the extent to which agencies use FUP to aid in the transition, the facilitators and barriers to doing so, and gather the youth's perspective on how FUP is or isn't working for them. Findings from the study will provide valuable insights to policymakers and program developers that could lead to improved program implementation. Furthermore, the extent of FUP usage and variation across sites will facilitate designing a rigorous evaluation of the program.

Youth Response to the Need for Housing and its Constraints – Supportive Housing for Youth Formerly in Foster Care

Dr. Bridgette Lery (Urban Institute), Dr. Sarah Prendergast (Urban Institute), Ms. Annelise Loveless (Urban Institute)

Session Chair: Bridgette Lery

Background and Objectives: The heightened risk of homelessness among youth who age out of foster care is now well established. Likewise, permanent supportive housing (PSH) has become one favored approach to serving the most vulnerable among people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. While many housing programs serve youth aging out of care, it is unknown how many take a PSH approach and whether those that do are effective in addressing the particular needs of young people who, by virtue of their recent experience in out-of-home care, may require different supports in their transition to adulthood than their counterparts who did not age out of care. The present research aims to discover and summarize PSH programs for youth who age out of foster care, filling an intermediate knowledge gap in the causal pathway from serving this target population to program efficacy.

Approach: We conducted a national search for housing programs for youth ages 18 to 24 who aged out of foster care in the U.S. Specifically, we were interested in PHS models which may be especially suited to youth with foster care backgrounds. Of the 75 programs we found, 23 agreed to a telephone interview. We then selected for site visits eight of these programs that would represent diversity across the following criteria: local housing affordability, clustered or single-site housing verses scattered site, best model program, connection to the child welfare system, coordinated entry verses open referrals, and geographic location. The visits include focus groups with youth participants and in-depth interviews with key staff including: case workers; program directors or managers; employment, education, or other specialists; and data managers. Interview and focus group transcripts are coded in NVivo and analyzed for themes.

The major research questions include: (1) What characterizes PSH programs for young people who aged out of care? What are the range of approaches to staffing, eligibility, recruitment and referrals, supportive services, and housing models? (2) For whom is permanent supportive housing appropriate? (3) To what extent do youth perceptions of the program's goals match those of program staff? (4) Are there ways in which a PSH model creates challenges for youth or for program operations? (5) What are common programmatic successes?

Findings: Among the 23 programs interviewed, three main typologies emerged: (1) PSH programs that intentionally target youth who aged out of foster care; (2) PSH programs that may serve youth who aged out of care, but cannot target them specifically because of coordinated entry requirements (i.e., local systems designed to systematically screen homeless individuals, prioritize them, and match them with programs according to need;, and (3) programs that target youth who aged out of care, but have service requirements and duration limitations, and are therefore not PSH.

Conclusions: Two themes emerged among programs in the second typology that have policy and program implementation implications. First, some programs that targeted aging out youth in the past have had to restructure their programming to accommodate a broader and sometimes higher-need population of young people under coordinated entry systems. Because these systems reorganize service slots rather than generate more slots, these efforts to prioritize the neediest can displace other youth who might benefit from the prior model. Second, true PSH models have no exit criteria, which creates the practical problem of program flow. A program cannot continue to serve an incoming population if the present population rarely or never exits. However, youth who age out of foster care de facto do not achieve legal permanency and may uniquely benefit from the permanent stability a PSH program promises.

Youth Response to the Need for Housing and its Constraints – "I wanna give her her space": How young adults exiting foster care navigate living with family after foster care

Ms. Brenda A. Tully (University of California, Los Angeles), Ms. Victoria Copeland (University of California, Los Angeles), Ms. Dominique Mikell (University of California, Los Angeles)

Session Chair: Bridgette Lery, PhD, Urban Institute

Background and Objectives: Young people formerly in foster care are at 2-4 times greater risk of experiencing homelessness than their peers in the United States. Further, young people who age out of foster care are at greater risk for experiencing homelessness than both youth who had contact with the child protective system but were never removed from family and youth who were placed in foster care and later reunified with a parent. Despite not reunifying with a family member prior to exiting care, one strategy some young people use to secure housing after exit is to return to live with a biological parent or other family members. Little prior research explores this phenomenon. This study used qualitative methods to begin to understand the dynamics between young people and their families as they attempt to secure places to live after foster care.

Methods: The first author conducted 5 audio-recorded focus groups, each 90-120 minutes long with 2-8 young adult participants (*N*=18) who had aged out of foster care to adulthood. Using purposive and multiple-entry snowball sampling, the first author recruited young adults, ages 18-26, initially from three organizations serving foster care alumni in Los Angeles, California, United States. The research team analyzed the transcribed data using Dedoose. Through an iterative coding process that included initial open coding and focused coding procedures, we found several common phenomena across all focus groups. One important phenomenon was that participants described turning to family members for housing as they transitioned out of foster care. To explore this phenomenon, we individually coded two transcripts focusing on families as facilitators of or barriers to housing. As a group, we discussed our coding and memos and developed a codebook to guide analyses of the remaining transcripts. Through further analyses using analytic techniques, such as the creation of network diagrams and flow charts of focused codes and categories, we identified four key subthemes. Group member interactions generated insights into processes participants used to navigate staying or living with family members as young adults.

Findings: 1) Instability related to *earlier family disruptions* remained unresolved. Participants described how their parents' prior and sometimes current experiences with incarceration, alcohol or drug use, medical or mental health conditions manifested in current difficulties providing or sharing housing with their young adult children. 2) Young people recognized the difficulties their family members faced and often chose to exit these living situations in favor of *striking out on their own*, even when family members welcomed them to stay longer. 3) In the midst of extreme circumstances, young people grasped their existence by drawing on *lessons of survival* based on their own tenacity and from biological and "street" family. Lessons of survival encompassed three realms: a) spirituality and faith, b) immersion in music or nature, and c) practical strategies for navigating shelter, systems, and advocacy. 4) *Family instability occurred within larger contexts*, compromising housing security for young adults and at times their family members, as well. Government policies that result in neighborhood divestment and individual and family surveillance constituted the larger contexts for instability and housing insecurity.

Conclusions: Findings highlight the continued importance of family to many young people who age out of care, the dynamics between young people and family as related to housing (in)security, and the contextual factors surrounding housing (in)security. Their ongoing familial relationships and housing precarity underscore the need for innovative interventions at the individual, familial, and policy levels, such as universal basic income,

universal access to affordable housing, and replacing systems that surveil with investments in families and neighborhoods by enacting anti-racist policies.

Youth self-report of polyvictimization: introducing a Portuguese adaptation of JVQ-R2 with a residential care sample

Dr. Alexandra M. Lino (Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive-behavioral Interventions, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra), Prof. Isabel Alberto (Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive-behavioral Interventions, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra), Prof. Luiza Nobre-Lima (Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive-behavioral Interventions, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra)

The Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire - 2nd revision (JVQ-R2; Hamby, Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2005) is a widely known screening measure of polyvictimization. It has been internationally used to assess the prevalence of exposure to multiple forms of victimization, as well as its impact on the developing child. That knowledge is, however, still scarce in Portugal, especially in residential care contexts. The present adaptation is a key part in a larger study that intends to fill this gap in knowledge by analyzing the impact of polyvictimization in the psychological functioning of youth in residential care (cognitive development, behavior, self-concept, interpersonal relationships, and trauma). Stemming from a combination of the screener sum and the abbreviated interview lifetime versions of JVQ-R2, this adaptation features the original 34 items covering conventional crime, child maltreatment, peer and sibling victimization, sexual victimization, and witnessing and indirect victimization, to which were added five more in order to encompass electronic victimization and peer relational aggression. In the abbreviated interview version, each of the items comprises follow-up questions designed to obtain details on incidents reported to the victimization screeners. The follow-up questions included in this new version of JVQ were subject to a few additions and substitutions to allow the crossover of relevant information to the impact these experiences can have on the adolescents' development. Specifically, three follow-up questions were drawn: one concerning the amount of exposure (once or more than once); a second one to screen if the exposure occurred before or after the adolescents were placed in residential care; and a final question about the perpetrator, including if it was someone they know from residential care (staff or peer), or someone whom they met online (e.g., social media). The final version received the author's approval. Following the guidelines of Sousa and Rojjanasrirat (2010), a sample of 10 adolescents aged between 14 and 17 years old from two different Residential Care Homes was used for the cognitive debriefing phase. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were made via Skype upon the board's authorization. Adolescents were first asked to assess the clarity of each question according to a Likert scale ranging from 0 (Not clear) to 3 (Perfectly clear). Results supported the conceptual, semantic and content equivalency of the translated instrument. Nonetheless, slight improvements to the structure of sentences used in the items were made in order to make them easily understood by the target population. The inquired adolescents also gave a positive feedback concerning the relevance of the items and valuable inputs considering semantics, length, and the complexity of answering to all of these questions. Implications of this adaptation for practice and policy within child protective services will be discussed.

Keywords: polyvictimization; Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ); adaptation; youth; residential care.

Youth-caregiver relationship as the looking-glass for youth's self-representations construction in the context of residential care

Dr. Carla Sofia Silva (CICPSI, Faculdade de Psicologia, Universidade de Lisboa), Prof. Maria Manuela Calheiros (CICPSI, Faculdade de Psicologia, Universidade de Lisboa), Dr. Eunice Magalhães (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), CIS-IUL, Lisboa, Portugal), Ms. Sandra Ornelas (Faculdade de Psicologia, Universidade de Lisboa)

Introduction

The processes that explain significant relationships' influence in self-construction and their impact on individuals' development are particularly relevant for youth in residential care (RC). Removed from their home environment to alternative placements, these individuals are exposed to specific relationships and educational contexts where residential caregivers seem to have important implications for the Self (e.g., Simkiss, 2013). Prior research has shown that youth in RC are primarily described with negative attributes and that professionals working in the field of youth at risk predominantly emphasized negative social images of youth in RC (Calheiros, Garrido, Lopes, & Patrício, 2015). However, and despite its central role in shaping individuals' psychosocial and academic adjustment, youth's self-construction process has not been systematically analyzed in the context of RC.

Objectives

Based on the Symbolic Interactionism Theory, the present study addresses this gap in the literature by testing the Looking Glass Self Hypothesis (LGSH; Cooley, 1902; Nurra & Pansu, 2009) within the youth-caregiver relationship in the context of RC. Specifically, we examined how specific caregivers' actual images of youth in care (i.e., SAI) are associated with youth's self-images (SI) via specific caregivers' reflected images (i.e., youth's perceptions of their main caregiver's images of them; SRI), controlling for the potential contributions of prior maltreatment experiences.

Method

Participants were 926 youth in RC units, 12-25 years old, their respective main caregiver (N=298) and case file managers (N=199) from 71 RC units. Youth's SI were measured through the Self-representation Questionnaire for Youth in Residential Care (SRQYRC; Patrício, Calheiros, & Martins, 2016). The SRQYRC was adapted to measure SAI and SRI. Prior maltreatment experiences were evaluated by each youth's respective case file manager.

Results

A multi-mediator path analysis revealed significant mediation effects of SRI in associations between SAI and youth's SI for all domains evaluated.

Conclusions

Results supported the LGSH in the context of youth-educator relationships in RC, emphasizing the important role of residential caregivers for the self-construction process of youth in RC. This study highlights the need to promote youth-caregiver relationships in RC settings that endorse the development of positive self-images in youth, through praise and feedback strategies contingent upon youth's behaviour related to specific self-images domains.

Youth-Guided Care: Youth Participation in Residential Interventions and System Change

Ms. Kari Sisson (Association of Children's Residential Centers), Ms. Jammie Gardner (Youth Era), Mr. Robert Lieberman (Lieberman Group, Inc.), Mr. Martin Rafferty (Youth Era)

Collective Submission: Youth-Guided Care: Youth Participation in Residential Interventions and System Change
Collective Submission Chair: Kari Sisson
Contact Person: Kari Sisson

Decades of research support the involvement of youth in systems, organizations, and even global affairs. In 2018, the United Nations actively recognized the impact of the voice of the child in matters of world peace, security, marginalization, and violence (un.org) and as integral components of a shared vision for their future as the next adult residents of planet earth.

The power of youth perspective was powerfully apparent in 2019, with Greta Thurnberg gracing the cover of TIME Magazine as person of the year. Miss Thurnberg was acknowledged for using the one resource young people around the world share- their voice- and she joins ranks with other youth activists such as Malala Yousafzai and Shamma bint Suhail Faris Mazrui in affecting change in what were historically adult conversations.

Throughout the history of child welfare, children's mental health, and therapeutic residential care, conversations about treatment planning, permanency, behavior management, and family dynamics have been considered adult conversations with little or no need for input from the young people themselves. The rejection of advocacy for their own care and treatment is often experienced as a form of oppression. Not unlike the world stage, much is changing in this realm. The term "youth guided" has become part of our working lexicon as young people are being included, consulted, and respected for their voice at the table. After all, it is their future, much like with Greta and Malala and Shamma, that is at stake.

This collective submission is about youth guided care in residential interventions and meaningful youth participation in program, family, community, and policy level decision making. Two of the proposed presenters are individuals with lived experience. One is lead author of "Youth Engagement and Empowerment Strategies", in *Residential Transformation: Practical Strategies and Future Directions* (2020). The other is Executive Director of Youth ERA, a peer run and staffed organization that provides peer support for youth in community drop in centers and wraparound services as well as postvention supports following suicides and school shootings, who has been recognized by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as one of 25 young adult game- changers in the world.

Objectives: This symposium will:
Illuminate the power of youth voice in community and system engagement
Define and examine the importance of youth-guided care in residential programs
Describe the characteristics, practices, key strategies and impact of youth-guided care in residential programs
Discuss the influence of youth voice in policy, advocacy and system transformation

Method: The authors will provide narrative overview of the content, supported by power point presentation, video presentation, and a youth engagement map developed by youth.

Results: Youth participation in their own treatment has made great strides in the past two decades but has not yet been systematically incorporated into programs and services. The achievements and innovations being highlighted offer opportunity for further important advancements.

Conclusion: Attendees will be engaged by the power and potential of youth-guided care and will learn:
-the significant impact of youth peer support in community settings;
-how to effectively engage youth;
-the importance of youth guided care in residential interventions;

-key practices for implementing youth guided care in residential programs;
-how engaging youth with lived residential experience in advocacy influences policy decisions.

Youth-Guided Care: Youth Participation in Residential Interventions and System Change- Nurturing the Voice: Engaging youth in systemic transformation

Ms. Kari Sisson (Association of Children's Residential Centers)

Youth-Guided Care: Youth Participation in Residential Interventions and System Change- Nurturing the Voice: Engaging youth in systemic transformation

Collective Submission Chair- Kari Sisson

Contact Person- Kari Sisson

Throughout the world, systems serving children and families are quite complex and layered, making significant transformation a daunting process. In the field of children's mental health, and specifically in therapeutic residential interventions, advancing the full incorporation of youth perspective has been hailed as a groundbreaking systemic transformation. This has galvanized pressure for change in the overarching values of systems and organizations, as well as in the daily work with children and families, and has generated improved experience of care as well as outcomes.

Integral involvement of youth voice in their own care and treatment has been a focus of the Association of Children's Residential Centers for the past two decades. As an international organization focused on best practices, the association embraced youth voice and the corresponding terminology as basic tenets of transformational work in residential interventions, from the daily therapeutic care in the program to the ongoing engagement with their family and the community. Specific actions the association has taken have included: involving youth as co-authors of its *Redefining Residential* series of white papers; welcoming and supporting the participation of youth and youth advocates as members of the Board of Directors; creating a youth track at annual conferences; hosting professional education opportunities from keynotes to webinars regarding youth voice; participating actively in the Building Bridges Initiative; convening a forum of national youth organizations at its headquarters to forge joint advocacy positions; and including youth as members of teams providing testimony to the United States Congress and congressional staff.

This presentation will provide strategies for incorporating youth perspective in broad scale innovation in the field as well as policy making initiatives in the regulatory system in the United States. Examples from specific agencies and policymaking forums will elucidate the potential and possibilities for systemic and organizational quality improvement that is fully committed to best practices and clinical excellence. We will share the youth voice of experience as one example of authentic youth empowerment to affect change.

Objectives – This paper will:

1.Describe varied approaches for involving youth voice in policy, advocacy, and system change.

2.Discuss the development, meaningful inclusion, and empowerment of youth voice is an effective strategy.

Methods – The author will provide a narrative overview of systemic transformation and the tangible impact on practice and values that results through the empowerment of youth voice. Video content demonstrating the impact of youth voice will be shared.

Results – Progress in residential programs, community services and the political arena have been significant, with youth voice, youth advocacy, and youth empowerment generating agency and system changes and altering the experiences of young people receiving residential interventions. More systematic embedding of such practices into system and policy arenas will generate greater well being and positive outcomes.

Conclusion – Attendees will learn:

-How the voice of lived experience is a powerful tool to help providers and systems truly understand the complex needs of children and families.

-That the authentic development of youth guided care is a vital component of clinical excellence in children's mental health.
-Approaches to including youth in multiple arenas of policy and practice development.

Youth-Guided Care: Youth Participation in Residential Interventions and System Change- The power of youth voice and youth peer support in community and system engagement

Mr. Martin Rafferty (Youth Era)

Engaging youth voice in the development of policies at the program, community, system, and societal levels not only positively impacts youth who participate, but ultimately results in better outcomes for youth and communities overall (Hibachi, Wright, and Hathcoat, 2010).

A “ladder” (continuum) of youth participation (Hart, 1992) that ranges from manipulation and tokenism to youth-led and shared decision making guides adults to meet youth where they are and support skill development for youth-led programming and equal youth-adult partnership in decision-making. Such efforts, focused on what young people state they need, saves resources as less time is spent treating symptoms instead of addressing the core issues that youth identify.

This paper describes work by a youth-led organization to operationalize youth guided care at the community and system levels, training and preparing youth to be effective partners in systems change and development, while also providing training and support for adults who are wishing to effectively engage young people. Through drop in centers, postvention crisis response, and positive youth development approaches, using Youth Peer Support (YPS) as an amplifier to traditional service delivery, youth are effectively engaged to make changes that have meaning for them in their own lives and in the system as well (Gardner, Kendrick-Burk, Montes, 2020).

Objectives: This paper will:

- Describe the development of a Youth Peer Support (YPS) workforce to provide services and supports to young people in crisis, including postvention for suicide and school shootings, using lived experience to engage youth through face to face and social media/text/chat, as well as to connect them to formal systems they may need to help them.
- Discuss the use of YPS Specialists on treatment and wraparound teams to ensure youth voice is integral to the treatment process and to help youth lead their own treatment team meetings
- Present data regarding the impact of peer run youth drop-in centers to support youth in systems of care and residential centers, and to facilitate transition from residential programs to the community
- Provide a youth engagement road map describing key aspects of engaging youth in community services and supports.

Method: The author will provide a narrative overview of the work of Peer Support Specialists, supplemented by power point presentation of positive youth development data and a handout of a road map for youth engagement.

Results: The work of Youth Peer support Specialists is producing outstanding results for Youth ERA, the program being discussed, as well as for other programs. This paper points to the possibilities of improved outcomes through more widespread incorporation of youth voice in services as members of an emerging workforce.

Conclusion: Attendees will learn

-A different approach to serving and supporting young people, one that challenges professionals to think differently about their work

-Approaches for working in partnership with youth in community settings and in response to crises;

-How engaging youth fosters an abiding belief in the capacity of youth, harnesses the power of youth voice, changes organizational culture, and improves outcomes.

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Habashi, J., Wright, L., & Hathcoat, J. D. (2012). Patterns of human development indicators across constitutional analysis of children's rights to protection, provision, and participation. Social Indicators Research, 105, 63-73.

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Youth-Guided Care: Youth Participation in Residential Interventions and System Change- Youth- guided care: Why and What?

Ms. Jammie Gardner (Youth Era)

Residential interventions, a term used to connote the entire system necessary to work with youth with serious challenges, is inclusive of three key elements of services and supports for youth and families: the therapeutic residential care that happens in the program; the transfer of the key interactions and elements of TRC to the family before, during and after the time in the program; and the engagement of the community in the work before during and after. The Building Bridges Initiative is a framework, that over the past 13 years, has identified pillars for the entire intervention with specifically identified practices that promote positive outcomes. One of the primary pillars of effective support is Youth Guided Care.

Youth Guided Care means that “youth are engaged as equal partners in creating system change in policies and procedures at the individual, community, state, and national levels” (www.samhsa.gov). Magellan Health Services, Inc. and the Building Bridges Initiative add that “… there is a continuum of power that should be given to young people based on their understanding and maturity in this strength-based change process. Youth-guided also means that the process should be fun and worthwhile” (www.buildingbrides4youth.org).

Youth Guided approaches can serve as an antidote to some of the primary challenges in residential settings that have been criticized by young people, for example, a lack of meaningful inclusion in decision making about their own lives, a sense of being patronized, behaviors being pathologized, and insufficient communication with family and friend. (American Association of Children’s Residential Centers, 2010).

Youth-guided practices in residential settings span individual treatment, program design and delivery, hiring, policy, governance, and quality improvement/evaluation levels, and yield gains in Positive Youth Development (Iwasaki, 2016, p. 267). Embedding them in the work of the program can be supported by hiring or contracting with Youth Peer Support Specialists/Advocates.

This presentation will provide an overview of youth guided care and describe the breadth and scope of implementation in residential programs.

Objectives: This paper will:

1. Define youth-guided care and provide the context out of which a body of youth guided practices have been identified.
2. Describe the scope of youth-guided practices that are being implemented across all levels in residential interventions
3. Review evaluative results of implementing youth guided care
4. Discuss the intersection of youth guided care and positive youth development
5. Provide examples of the impact of specific youth guided practices in residential programs.

Method: The author will provide narrative presentation of content, supplemented by power point and video.

Results: The presentation will elucidate how youth-guided care has been successful in generating cultural transformation in residential programs and positive result, and will identify challenges in incorporating these practices more broadly.

Conclusion: Attendees will learn:

- A definition and accompanying rationale based on decades of research (James, 2020), clinical experience, and client values for meaningfully and fully including youth as integral partners in their own care

- A framework of practices that can be implemented in residential programs that generate meaningful youth participation in their own treatment
- Impacts of partnering with youth to guide their care, in the data and as subjectively reported.

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Youth-Guided Care: Youth Participation in Residential Interventions and System Change- Residential Practices for Engaging and Empowering Youth Participation

Mr. Robert Lieberman (Lieberman Group, Inc.)

Over the past decade residential programs in the United States have been implementing practices that invite and engage youth participation. Propelled in large measure by the Building Bridges Initiative (Gardner, Kendrick-Burk, Montes, 2020), these enhance the clinical work by empowering youth to be partners in their own treatment. This arena of practice development- youth guided care- has been both responsive to concerns from youth and families about the degree to which their residential treatment experience hasn't met their individual needs nor been supportive of their culture and values, and/or has been oppressive, as well as proactive in seeking to foster intrinsic motivation through inclusion of youth in decisions regarding their own lives. Organizations have found youth-guided strategies to increase buy-in and participation, enhance staff responsiveness, strengthen youth and staff commitment, and lend clarity to the organization's mission (ACRC, 2010).

Youth guided care fully embraces youth engagement, identified as a fundamental right by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It moves beyond simple input to meaningful participation and empowerment, opportunities for youth to take responsibility, and leadership in partnership with the adults. (Gardner, et.al) Youth participation in their own care has been found effective in studies over the last several decades, to a degree that can be seen as evidence-informed (James, 2020).

This presentation will provide an overview of the characteristics, components and practices of youth-guided care in residential programs. Themes of youth engagement will be discussed and specific strategies and tips for youth empowerment will be presented. Examples of implementation and results in two agencies will illustrate the impact.

Objectives: This paper will:

1. Describe cultural and structural characteristics of residential programs implementing youth-guided care.
2. Identify key themes of youth engagement to attend to in implementing youth-guided care in residential interventions
3. Discuss strategies for youth empowerment in residential programs
4. Delineate key components of youth guided care
5. Provide examples and existing evidence of the impact of youth guided care.

Method: The author will present a narrative overview of the content and related data, clinical experience, and client reported experience, supplemented by power point.

Results: Implementing youth guided care is being found to require cultural change within the organization to implement inclusive processes for practice and program development, and to yield improved outcomes and organizational climate. Much has been accomplished that has resulted in establishing a framework of practices for further study.

Conclusion: Attendees will learn:

-Strategies for implementing structural and cultural organizational changes that support youth-guided care
-Key focal issues and themes in implementing youth-guided care
-Approaches for empowering youth and addressing accompanying organizational and staff impact
-Programmatic components to support and guide implementation of youth guided care
-Specific practices that facilitate youth-guided care

AACRC. (2010). *Redefining residential: Youth guided treatment*. Retrieved January 12, 2020, from www.togetherthevoice/story/acrc_position_paper_seventh_series_youth _guided_treatment

Gardner, J., Kendrick-Burk, L., Montes, R. (in publication) *Youth Engagement and Empowerment Strategies*. In Transforming Residential Interventions: Practical Strategies and Future Directions. London, U.K.: Routledge.

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Youth-led project to identify protective factors among youth with government care experience

Dr. Maya Peled (McCreary Centre Society), Dr. Annie Smith (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Katie Horton (McCreary Centre Society), Ms. Stephanie Martin (McCreary Centre Society)

Objective: Youth in and from government care (child welfare system) in British Columbia, Canada, took part in a youth-led research project to identify protective factors in the lives of youth in and from care which are associated with positive health and well-being. Youth were part of a non-profit research agency's Youth Research Academy (YRA), which supports young people aged 16–24 with care experience to design, deliver and disseminate research projects of interest to youth in and from care and the agencies that serve them.

For this project, members of the YRA were supported to carry out quantitative analyses using SPSS statistics. They chose to focus predominantly on identifying protective factors, as opposed to examining vulnerability and risk, because they were interested in taking a strengths-based approach and identifying concrete ways that youth in and from care can be supported across a range of domains to promote their health and well-being.

Method: Members of the YRA analysed self-report survey data from the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS), which was completed by 38,015 students (grades 7–12) in public schools across the province. The BC AHS takes place every five years and is a cluster-stratified random sample, stratified by grade and health region. It is considered representative of over 95% of students in mainstream schools across the province.

The YRA focused on the experiences of students who had been in government care or an alternative to care (over 1600 survey respondents). They chose to explore protective factors and supports in five areas: family, school, community, peers, and individual factors. The youth developed an analysis plan, analysed the data (with the support of trained researchers), and created a draft report of the results. They then reviewed the results, wrote reflections, identified key findings and created dissemination materials.

Results: Findings demonstrated that when youth with care experience have supportive adults and peers in their lives, they are more likely to report better health and well-being, and to have goals and hope for their future. For example, youth with government care experience were less likely than those never in care to feel their teachers cared about them (56% vs. 66%). However, among youth in and from care, those who felt their teachers cared were more likely than those who did not to report good or excellent mental health (63% vs. 31%), to feel safe at school (75% vs. 19%), and to expect to graduate from high school (84% vs. 67%) and pursue post-secondary education (76% vs. 59%). Feeling an adult in the broader community, outside their family or school, really cared about them was also linked to better mental health ratings and a lower likelihood of self-harm in the past year.

Also, taking part in weekly sports activities in the community was linked to better health. Further, youth who felt their activities were personally meaningful, and that their ideas were listened to and acted upon in those activities, were more likely to feel connected to their community and to feel hopeful for their future.

Conclusion: This youth-led project enabled youth in and from care to have a voice and to take the lead in research that affects them. Not only did they have an opportunity to personally benefit (e.g., by honing their research skills), but the findings also point to ways that adults in the community can best support youth in and from care to experience positive health and well-being and to thrive.

«Can’t have it, but she doesn’t want it either»: Biographical perspectives of adoptees on birth mothers and authorities’ view

Mr. Adrian Seitz (Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW)), Mr. Lukas Emmenegger (Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW))

Study Background

A new Swiss adoption law has been in force since January 2018. In addition to the more liberal conditions for adoption, the principle of secrecy of adoption is now significantly less rigid. The Swiss legislator aims to achieve a sustainable improvement in adopted children’s conditions for growing up and to strengthen their best interest. In general, little is known about how the intentions behind the legal caesura affect official practices in out of home placements and the biographies linked to them. However, in an attempt to come to terms with the history of residential and foster care, first studies on foreign adoption and the use of coercion in individual cases of domestic adoption are being conducted.

Objectives and questions

This interdisciplinary research project is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. It aims to gain new scientific insights into the continuity and changes in Swiss domestic adoptions between 1922 and 2017, as well as the effects of adoption policies and practices on the biographies of adopted people and their biological parents. The focus of this contribution is not the entire period under investigation, but the second half of the 20th century and especially the 1970s. This time span provides particulary valuable insight for the research’s epistemological questions due to its dynamics of both informal (family, parenthood and motherhood values) and formal (changes in the law and the procedural context) change. The underlying question is that of the influence of socially prevailing and changing images of relinquishing mothers and fathers, family models and ideals. Thus, in this contribution, we explore the following two epistemological questions:*Which reasons that led to the release of a child for adoption have changed beyond changes in the law or have remained the same? How do people who were adopted before, in and after the 1970s understand these reasons and how do they incorporate them into their own biographies?*

Field access and methods

In order to understand the complex interplay of influencing factors within contextual changes, 50 biographical interviews with adopted people and 10 with biological parents have been conducted and analysed so far applying the method of Grounded Theory. The individual biographical experiences of past adoptions are a unique, yet rapidly fading and highly sensitive source for understanding the future impact of adoption policies and practices on the people concerned. In addition, the reasons for adoptions in the context of archival studies are the historical focus of research interest during the period under study. We combine quantitative analysis of 7 reference years with hermeneutical and analytical interpretation of adoption case files.

First results

Even after the 1970s, authorities often justified adoption releases by stating that the biological mothers did not want or were unable to care for their child. Due to this «unwillingness» and «inability», the authorities could not be accused of pressuring parents or even forcing them to approve the adoption. The interaction between law and changing values is very tense and crystallizes in official practice and biographical issues, which have a significant influence on the perceived powerlessness of the adoptees even decades after the adoption. Many have to deal with issues such as moral intentions of previous authority practices. They have only vague knowledge about decision-making processes surrounding their own birth, combined with the question of guilt or innocence of the birth mother. The development of the adoption system in Switzerland does not follow a teleological development logic. It is rather a crystallization point of diverging movements and forces, which have a powerful and often painful or burdening effect on the adoptees and their biological as well as social relatives.

«Ready Steady Play» Childfriendly Spaces in temporary housing for refugee children (Duration July 2021- July 2022)

Ms. Franziska Widmer (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family), Ms. Ida Ofelia Brink (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Institute of childhood, youth and family), Ms. Mela Kocher (ZHDK Zurich University of the Arts, Game Design)

The project bases on an observation made in a project with children of refugees in Switzerland living in a temporary residence. We realized that many of the children are lagging behind - or play differently - in their way to play than children who grew up in other circumstances. Also, in temporary shelter there are often no child friendly spaces available. Therefore, one goal of the project is to know more about the way refugee children play in temporary accomodation in Switzerland in the outside area and to redesign one outside area during the project. Based on ethnographic observations in three centers and expert interviews with three Social workers in those centers and observations and intervention in a week of games in Summer 2021, the outside area from one place will be transformed in Autum 2021. Further ethnographic observations, a second week of games, and Interviews with parents are planned in Summer 2022.

Research Question:

How do children of refugees play in temporary accommodation? How children's play and parental engagement in play can be promoted for families in the asylum area with minimal offers and structural changes, especially in the outdoor area?
Methods:
The researchers want to learn more about the children's point of view, or about their experiences via observation, because access via language is difficult, not only because of language skills. Talking about play, which is very action-oriented, is not a meaningful approach.
Our research questions for the ethnographic observations are the following:

- Do the children play outside, and if so, how?

- What games can be observed outside, without adult guidance or involvement?
- How are the respective conditions on site incorporated into the games?
- How do the children react on adult ideas for games? What kind of games are successful, bring joy to the children?
- How could the outside area be transformed with simple methods, as plants and cheap recycling material?

The research questions for the expert interviews:

- What play behavior do they observe in their daily work?
- How do they interpret this?
- From the professionals' perspective, what could help make the outdoor spaces of the environment more child- and family-friendly?
- From the professionals' perspective, what could help empower parents to support their children in transition?

Goals:
The project aims to generate more knowledge about the way refugee children play in their still uncertain situation in transition. We want to see how children play without and with adult guidance, with the goal of creating more child-friendly spaces in temporary shelters. The project starts from the thesis that we cannot align play and outdoor space desgn ideas with the way western middle class children play.

In September 2021 the outside area will not yet be built, but the
results from the ethnographic observations, the expert interviews and
the week of games are available and can be shared and discussed at the EUSARF-Conference.

‘Because I’m a kid’: The struggle for children’s recognition in social work practice and some thoughts about Family Group Conferencing as a decision-making approach

Dr. Mary Mitchell (The University of Edinburgh)

Children and young people’s participation in decision making remains a key focus of social work practice. Yet the protection and participation of children and young people in our society remains a setting of tension for children, families and practitioners. There is often an inherent conflict experienced in practice between what a child feels and wants and what adults may consider being in their ‘best interest’. Research has found that the spaces within which negotiation and resolution occur reflect at times the issues which are of concern, occasionally the assertiveness of children but most of all the attitudes of the adults involved. This paper focuses on the change in relationships between individuals when involved in the Family Group Conferencing a child welfare decision making process, using the example of situations where a child in the family is at risk of going into State care to illustrate the general point. It became apparent from the evidence in this study that many younger respondents considered their interactions with adult family members and professionals was affected by those adults perceptions of them ‘being a kid’ and that this impacted on young people’s capacity to be partners in decision-making. Given the role of importance of human interaction on decision making process this paper draws from Axel Honneth’s Recognition Theory as a lens though which to frame the discussion. The study found that the ways in which children were acknowledged in Family Group Conferencing process affected their involvement and interaction with adult family members and professionals. This, in turn, impacted the outcomes young people experienced and identified as important. This study sheds light on the experiences of young people involved in the social work system and what can help or hinder the conditions for young people to be acknowledged and participate in decisions affecting their lives. Further, given the issue of relationships are central to social work practice lends weight to the proposition that Honneth’s Recognition Theory may be a useful conceptual framework for understanding and improving approaches to decision making in child care and protection work.

This paper critically discusses evidence of young people experiences of Family Group Conferencing child welfare decision-making process from a retrospective case study which sought to better understand the contribution Family Group Conferencing makes to children and family outcomes where the child is at risk of being taking into State care. A multi-case study approach was adopted in order to gain a rich and deep knowledge of the real-life interactions and perspectives of those involved in Family Group Conferencing. Eleven Family Group Conferencing case studies were developed, and each case study include the perspective of different stakeholders in the process including: looked after children (n=10) and their parents and extended social network (n=22), as well as professionals (n=28) involved with them. Family Group Conferencing service documents (n=94) were also analysed.

‘Child seen as a part…’, and an extension, of self: A phenomenological study on Indian adoptive parents

Dr. Sahana Mitra (Royal University for Women), Prof. Rajani Konantambigi (Tata Institute of Social Sciences)

Adoption is governed by several social, emotional and historical forces that shape the psychological processes associated with choosing adoption as a family form. The coming of the child in the family adds to the reconstruction of identity in the adoptive parents but it also marks the movement away from their imaginary child to actual, real child in their lives. This integration of child happens at both emotional and physical level. Hence, the paper highlights the transformation in identity and self of seven Indian adoptive parents in relation to the child across three phases of adoption (pre-during-post). These parents have undergone long years of involuntarily childlessness, were diagnosed with primary/secondary infertility and completed their family through non-family domestic adoption.

Phenomenological methodology was used to examine their pre to post adoption journey from being an infertile couple to gaining a sense of entitlement in the last phase. Data was collected through Jointly constructed couple interviews, and was triangulated with interviews from adoption social workers and medical professionals.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) revealed significant themes which led to the development of ‘model of adoptive parenthood’ showing the sense of evolving identity in relation to the child through six stages across three phases of adoption - *loss and resolve*’; ‘*discouraged and persistence*’; ‘*waiting and preparation*’; ‘*fear and attachment*’; ‘*uncertainty and sharing*’; and ‘*stabilizing and exploring*’. The model of adoptive parenthood further highlighted several significant elements such as marital relationship, social relationships, and parental history, that had a bidirectional relationship with the three phases of adoption and to the six stages.

The study findings show the influence of gender and pro-birth culture on the adoptive parents’ unfulfilled dreams in the pre-adoption phase, their increase in the status as parent in the society in during-adoption phase and finally, finding a sense of normalcy to be accepted as parents of the child, in the post-adoption phase. This transition and transformation in relation to the child has been discussed among the diverse discourses on infertility, adoption and family dynamics present in a non-western country such as India, where secrecy, stigma and closed system of adoption still influence the adoption process. A further analysis showed a sense of validation and child embodiment, which formed a crucial aspect of identity of adoptive parents.

The implications of the study in relation to social work practice are discussed. It is envisaged that the experiences, needs and vulnerabilities of the already adopted will help to devise intervention strategies for future adoptive parents as well as those who are parenting around several aspects related to self and identity.

‘Decision-making and Participation of Children in the Child Protection System’ - The Invisible Child: The Child’s Perspective in Judicial Decision-Making in Eight European Countries

Dr. Jenny Krutzinna (University of Bergen), Dr. Katrin Križ (Emmanuel College), Prof. Tarja Pösö (University of Tampere / School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Prof. Marit Skivenes (University of Bergen)

Background

In this study, we examine how courts in eight European countries consider the child’s perspective when they decide about the removal of newborn children from home. The study analyzes children’s position in the judgments, including their needs and vulnerabilities. These decisions are challenging and typically involve fewer dimensions than cases with older children, who have more lived experiences (cf. Masson & Dickens, 2014).

Our study departs from a theoretical position we call the Child Equality Perspective (CEP). This perspective entails measuring the extent to which public decision-makers explore and describe the child’s circumstances within a decision-making process. The CEP and its related standards aim to assess and ensure the child’s presence in proceedings about children even in the absence of direct and immediate evidence provided by the children themselves. As such, this perspective is especially relevant for children who are not capable of partaking fully in the decision-making process, such as the children described in the judgments under study.

Objectives

Our aim is to find out how the child’s position is described, and the child’s perspective is considered in child protection interventions by the state. In most countries, it is courts or court-like bodies that have the authority to make decisions about restrictions of parental rights. Our study contributes to the discussions about children’s rights, the legitimacy of state interventions, and the quality of decision-making in the child’s best interests.

Method

Our data material consists of all the care orders of newborns made (or available for analysis) for one or several years in Austria, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Norway, and Spain. It comprises 219 judgements made and written by the courts or court-like bodies on care order proceedings about a newborn child.

Our analysis addresses the following questions:

- How is the child described?
- What do we learn about the child’s needs, vulnerabilities, personality, and prospects?
- What do we learn about the child’s pre-birth condition and condition at birth?
- What was the child’s exposure to risk and neglect in the first few days?
- What was the child’s care needs?

Results and discussion

Our study reveals that the children remain largely invisible in the judgments, but with clear country differences. It is rare for a child not to be described at all in a judgment, but it does happen in all countries, albeit to varying degrees. Fewer than one-tenth (nine percent) of all judgments described the specific care needs of the child. Over one-third (38 percent) provided a general description, and 19 percent of judgments provided both a general and a specific description of the child’s needs. Most judgments (75 percent) did not mention the child’s pre-birth condition. More than half of the judgments (52 percent) did not mention the child’s condition at birth. Overall, about a quarter of the judgments (26 percent) did not mention risks to the child or neglect. A little over half of all judgments (51 percent) mentioned the child's care requirement(s).

We argue that children's invisibility constitutes a fundamental obstacle for being 'equal' in the judgments, which will shape the child's future. This raises serious concerns about the quality of the judicial decisions about the child's best interest.

‘If you take it personally you break’ - neglected voices on violence in secure units for adolescents

Mr. Peter Andersson (Department of Social Work, Stockholm University), Prof. Carolina Överlien (Nasjonalt kunnskapssenter om vold og traumatisk stress (NKTVS))

Aim

To a large degree, the voices of staff running daily operations in secure units for adolescents, particularly on sensitive issues such as violence and abuse, have been missing. The aim of the present study was to investigating what forms of violence staff in family like secure units encounter in their day-to-day work and to deepen the understanding of how they handle it.

Background

The relationship between staff and youth in secure units is often close and staff is often a person in a position of trust and authority. The idea is that the institutional frame should create something similar to a family, as many young people placed there come from disrupted backgrounds or lack close relationships to their biological family. The family as ideal for the institutions´ work and organization could therefore be stressed in different ways. With this as a backdrop, it is particularly problematic that The Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (SiS) has reported a rise in violent incidents between staff and youth placed in secure units.

Methods (data-material and analysis)

Fifty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff at three different secure units for adolescents in Sweden all working at Swedish, state-operated, 24-hour secure units (SiS) for young people aged 15 to 21:

At secure unit 1, staff work only with boys. Twenty-seven of the participants in this study came from this institution, including 7 women and 20 men. On average, they had four years of experience working in a secure unit.

At secure unit 2, staff also work only with boys. Twenty study participants came from this institution, including 9 women and 11 men. On average, they had three and one-half years of experience working in a secure unit.

At secure unit 3, staff work only with girls. Six study participants came from this institution, including 3 women and 3 men. On average, they had nine years experience working in a secure unit.

Interview questions were thematically ordered according to specific areas, such as ‘describe violence at your workplace’, ‘describe your relationship to the youth’ and ‘describe how you cope with violence in your day-to-day work’. Each interview started with the question, ‘How do you define violence?’ The material was organised through a thematic analysis.

Findings

The analysis yield six themes placed under two headings; ‘A violent scene? A matter of definition’ (violence in the direction staff to youth and youth to staff) and ‘Handling violence: strategies employed’ (four different coping-strategies which staff address handling violence). The results show how staff describe youth as the violent party and how they suppress their own emotions. Additionally, staff articulated their own use of violence toward youth and their emotional stance, describing an interpersonal shield that protected them from violence.

Conclusions

The findings underline the importance of raising questions about the nature of violence in these kind of residential care institutions, because it also affects the youths. It is important to create an understanding of the fear of violence. This places the institution in a ‘pivotal position’. The importance of this lies in the fact that staff talk about their exposure to violence, but they do not talk about a violent setting. Finally, the institution itself has a responsibility to acknowledge and provide education about different forms of violence and how violence affects the individual.

‘Innovative approaches to working with vulnerable young people’ -Staying Close: Learning from an Innovative Pilot Programme To Support Young People Leaving Residential Care in England

Dr. Zinnia Mitchell-Smith (Manc), Ms. Jo Dixon (Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York), Dr. Dan Allen (• Manchester Metropolitan University), Dr. Mariela Neagu (Rees Centre, University of Oxford)

Background

Many young people leaving out of home care are confronted with a sudden loss of support, facing a so-called cliff edge. They are at greater risk of homelessness, unemployment, feeling isolated and lacking the skills and support networks to break the multiple disadvantages they are confronted with (Atkinson & Hyde, 2019). While those who grew up in foster care have the option to stay put with their foster carer until the age of 21, there is currently no similar statutory offer for those leaving residential care. Residential care leavers can therefore, face an even greater risk of feeling cast adrift and being caught a circle of disadvantage.

Research identifies the importance and benefits of maintaining consistent and reliable relationships and support networks for care leavers to build resilience and navigate the transition to adulthood. To improve support and outcomes for this vulnerable group, the government funded a pioneering pilot programme to test creative approaches to helping residential care leavers remain in contact with their carers beyond the age of 18. This paper draws on findings from evaluations of the eight Staying Close pilot projects. Each project had its own individual aims and objectives but all were based on providing innovative solutions to assisting young people to build supportive networks and make a supported transition into accommodation that was close or connected to their former carers.

Methods

The eight projects were evaluated by researchers at Manchester Metropolitan, Oxford and York Universities. The evaluations employed mixed-method including focus groups and/or interviews with young people, interviews and surveys with professionals, and included measures of wellbeing and mental health (Good Childhood Index and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale). The evaluations involved a participatory component, with young care-leavers receiving training and support to carry out face-to-face interviews with evaluation participants (Dixon et al, 2018).

Findings

Evaluation data showed that young people accessing Staying Close had high level and multiple needs, suggesting they might have struggled to make use of ‘service as usual’ and been unable to adapt well to independent living. A range of creative housing options were tested. Findings suggested that some components of the projects were not completely innovative in that some residential workers had previously maintained contact when a young person moved on; however, the formalisation of the process enabled all young people in the pilot to have support after leaving residential care. Intensive support from a trusted worker who was available, and sometimes trained, to address the specific needs of the young person and availability of flexible or drop-in type support as well as longer-term bespoke support, appeared to assist young people’s readiness for leaving care and for a more successful transition to independence. Despite the initial purpose that the young person would stay close to their worker or residential home, this proved not to always be the wish of the young person. Projects adapted according to the needs of young people and in order to negotiate implementation challenges. Findings highlight the experiences of implementing and evaluating the Staying Close projects as well as changes required to deliver the projects. It contrasts different approaches and the impact they had on the young people who received the intervention.

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‘Innovative approaches to working with vulnerable young people’ -Supporting Care Leaver Parents Through Child Protection Processes in Ireland

Ms. Brenda Kneafsey (National University of Ireland, Galway)

Empowering people in care (EPIC): Developing a new approach to supporting care leaver parents in Ireland through advocacy.

Background

EPIC provides a platform for empowering young people in and from care to have a voice and share their perspectives through advocacy. EPIC offers support across all areas affecting care-experienced young people. Parental Rights of Care Leavers in Aftercare has become a significant part of the role for EPIC Advocates and is amongst the top five presenting issues for young people we work with. This paper concentrates on EPIC’s innovative approach to supporting young parents in the Irish aftercare system. It describes how advocates work with care-experienced parents to navigate a system that can place them and their child under scrutiny and risk of separation and how this work is shaping our understanding of the impact of parenting on care leavers’ experiences and access to services.

Evidence from our practice and international research shows that care leavers are statistically more likely to start families earlier than their peers, with significant numbers (approx.12%) of female care leavers becoming pregnant while under Aftercare services in Ireland. Care-experienced parents also face greater risk of having their child removed into care or adopted (one study reported 27% of mothers whose child was adopted was a care leaver).

Early pregnancy and parenthood can cause care leavers to drop out of education and training, which in Ireland reduces eligibility and access to aftercare supports.

These new mums are more likely to come to the attention of Child Protection and Welfare Social Work Departments in Ireland due to low family and social supports, especially for those with mental health or learning difficulties.

Methods

Referrals to support this group often come from Aftercare services who recognise potential conflicts of interest, as they are employed by the same agency providing Child Protection and Welfare Service.

EPIC advocates directly assist these young parents and can become involved at any stage of the process from Pre-Birth Case Conference to Full Care Order Hearing Stage.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, are widely supportive of this approach as they recognise the vulnerability of care leaver parents and their lack of family and social support through being in care.

The role of advocates vary depending on the stage of such cases and type of organisation engaged with:

Child Protection Case Conference: the advocate’s role is to prepare the care leaver parent in terms of the attendees and purpose of the meeting. Advocates will develop strategies with them to manage their emotions through potentially difficult discussions and ensure they have opportunities to ask questions.

Court proceeding and legal teams: when supporting the care leaver parent at court (usually Emergency, Interim and Care Order Hearings) the advocate’s role is to help them understand the reports submitted by other professionals and ensure they are clear about the directions given to their legal team. As advocates, we must request permission from Family Law or District Court Judges to support the young person in court as Child Care cases are heard *In Camera* as private hearings. EPIC has found that nationally Judges are supportive of Vulnerable Care Leaver Parents having support in the courtroom as it ensures the young person understands the legal arguments taking place among legal teams and the decisions of the court, legal jargon being difficult to understand especially at such emotive times.

Conclusions

This work allows us to advocate nationally using our report findings to highlight the issues of differing thresholds across the country for care leaver parents and the anomalies care leaver parents experience in terms of supports available to them as new parents.

‘Vulnerable babies’ under a risk paradigm: The infant perspective

Dr. Ariane Critchley (Edinburgh Napier University)

The risks to the health, well-being and development of infants and very young children of less than optimal care have been prominent in policy discourse and ‘parenting’ advice in recent years. The idea of a ‘critical period’ for child development, beginning in utero, and continuing over the first two to three years of life has become firmly established. This perspective locates the risks to babies within the family and emphasises the importance of good maternal care that begins from the moment of conception, if not earlier (Waggoner, 2017). The author’s study of pre-birth child protection work found that pregnant women were repeatedly blamed and shamed for problems that can be understood as structural and not under the women’s direct control; particularly poverty, poor housing, and domestic abuse (Critchley, 2020a; 2020b). As one young expectant mother described her experience of child welfare processes, ‘I don’t feel like I’ve been treated even as a human’. The harm that this may create for mothers has been well-established in research (Broadhurst & Mason, 2020). However, the perspective of infants themselves is less frequently adopted, beyond a child rescue narrative. What are the consequences for those babies and young children whose home lives, families and even the uterine environments they grow within, are understood as ‘risky’?

This presentation will seek to explore how babies considered to be ‘at risk’ are conceptualised and why a meaningful infant perspective has been so absent from current conversations about the welfare of very young children. Potential ways forward for future research in addressing this gap will be considered, drawing on the work of Gottlieb and DeLoache (2017).

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“Children’s perspectives on well-being and vulnerability” (title of session)/The value of qualitative comparative research on child well-being and vulnerability: Reflections upon the Children’s Understandings of Well-being study (abstract title)

Prof. Christine Hunner-Kreisel (university of vechta), Dr. Tobia Fattore (Macquiare University of Sidney), Prof. Susann Fegter (University of Berlin)

Abstract for the collective session lead by Dr. Marion Pomey, University of Applied Science, Zürich: “Children’s perspectives on well-being and vulnerability” –
“The value of qualitative comparative research on child well-being and vulnerability: Reflections upon the Children’s Understandings of Well-being study” (title of the individual abstract)
Tobia Fattore, Susann Fegter and Christine Hunner-Kreisel

Research obtaining children’s perspectives on their well-being and vulnerability have contributed insights into how children define and experience different aspects of their well-being and how these aspects relate to their feelings of vulnerability. In our presentation we review some developments in qualitative research on children’s well-being and vulnerability and discuss the potential contribution this research might make in respect to quantitative research in this field, which remains the orthodoxy, especially in child well-being research. We demonstrate this by discussing a multinational study of children’s well-being named **Children’s Understandings of Well-being study** (www.cuwb.org) that utilises a qualitative, participatory and context-sensitive methodology, providing findings from this study to demonstrate how qualitative research can inform the interpretation of quantitative data. We provide some empirical results from the CUWB study as a means of demonstrating the value of and challenges in undertaking context sensitive analysis of concepts of well-being and vulnerability and especially the insights obtained from cross-national and cross-border comparisons.

“Doing family” in residential care: Children’s participation and agency at dinnertime in two Italian group homes

Dr. Marzia Saglietti (Almamater Università di Bologna)

Contemporary literature and debate on residential care for children is usually based on psycho-social studies, clinical approaches and organizational studies related to designing and delivering a “well-enough” everyday life settings of alternative care. Interactional studies investigating residential care as interactional sites are very few. The scarcity of this type of research is far more astonishing as residential care is made of ongoing continuing interactions (either discursive and multi-modal, verbal and non verbal) between peers, between children and professionals, between professionals and volounteers, and so forth. Every educational and supportive work has an implication in terms of interactional patterns and exchanges. But how do they interact in their daily conversations? And what roles children perform? What are the interactional opportunities for children?

Filling this gap and answering to these interrogatives, this paper investigates group homes as: (a) *settings of cultural socialization* (Rogoff, 2003); (b) *sites of family interaction*s; and (C) *thinking spaces* (Perret-Clermont, 2003), i.e. physical and symbolic environments in which participants “elaborated the perceived reality in order to represent or symbolize it and to become able to reflect on it” (p. 1).

Drawing on an in-depth ethnographic study of two Italian group homes – i.e. small facilities run by resident staff –, this paper aims at: (a) illustrating the discursive practices of “doing family” in residential care for children; (b) focusing on how children

interact and express their perspectives at dinnertime, by analyzing their discursive roles and agency in interaction, i.e their capacity to ‘make a difference’, that is, to have an effect on themselves, on [the] institutions, on individuals, on the environment” (Duranti, 2004, p. 453).

Starting by comparing the limited research on discursive practices in residential care for children to the far more abundant literature on interactions in family and by adding to the body of literature on the role of agency in the making of family talk (Sirota, 2006; Fatigante & Padiglione, 2009; Giorgi et al., 2009), we focus on the interactional details through which children’s agency is implemented and impacts not only on the participation framework of dinnertime conversations, but also on the global accomplishment of group homes’ everyday talk as family talk (that is, on their “doing family”).

Adopting a discourse-analysis approach to video-recorded dinnertime interaction, we discuss how different options of participation and agency appear to be locally available to participants, when contributing to the same discursive activity, such as praying before eating or co-constructing the rules of the house. Through their local discursive practices, participants in fact “do family” with performing two completely different interactive models, that we named “centripetal” and “open”, providing very different opportunities for children to participate, express their perspectives and contribute to the talk-in-interaction. In the conclusion, we suggest some practical implications and future research on the interactional details of residential care for children.

“How we see this”: Participation in Everyday Life in Residential Care – The Perspective of Young People

Dr. Stefan Eberitzsch (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Social Work, Institute of Childhood, Youth and Family), Ms. Julia Rohrbach (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Social Work, Institute of Childhood, Youth and Family), Dr. Samuel Keller (ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Social Work, Institute of Childhood, Youth and Family)

Study background and aims:

In spite of recent developments in residential childcare, young people are still only partly involved in decision-making in processes affecting them personally. However, according to the UN CRC, young people have the right to participate in issues that concern them directly. In general, participation has a strong effect on youths' development since it enables them to experience self-efficacy and to feel accepted. Furthermore, participation is considered as a factor to ensure well-being and child protection in residential care. Especially in residential care settings, it is a challenge to establish a participatory culture. The reason is the interference of the institutions' bureaucratic and structural framework on the one hand with the young people's individual perspectives on the other hand.

The purpose of this study, which is called *“How we see this” - The Perspective of Young People in Residential Care*is to investigate young people's perspective and experiences on participation in residential care and to determine how they perceive their participatory opportunities.

Method:

This project was conducted at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences, in collaboration with three residential care institutions and the Swiss association for residential care, ‘integras’. We gathered data for this study with the help of four qualitative group discussions according to Bohnsack. The sample consisted of 23 children between 9-16 years from the participating institutions. The integrally transcribed interviews were analyzed based on the documentary method of Bohnsack.

The analysis of the collected data will reveal the collective interpretive schemes of participation. The primary focus is on the identification of different forms of individual and collective participation in everyday situations. In addition, implicit social configurations and the existing power structure were examined.

Interim Results:

The interim findings show that young people in residential care feel marginalized as far as their participation in negotiation of rules, procedures, structures and places is concerned. Depending on the possibilities of involvement, the sample groups see themselves as the opposite pole to the professionals. Furthermore, the culture of institutions creates threshold experiences in relevant dimensions of everyday life. They often hinder young people to feel involved for example when contacting birth families. If they do not feel involved in these dimensions, they consider decisions made by professionals as overwhelming and arbitrary.

First Conclusions:

The results offer insights into important issues, in which participation is necessary from the children‘s point of view. The following hypotheses can be derived from the findings:

- As long as existing thresholds, structures and rules are given and do not seem influenceable, young people try to be heard by breaking them instead of creating them.
- The more the young people are involved in decisions with or concerning their birth family and further relevant contacts out of care, the more they accept their placement process.
- Participation means for the target group to experience attention and to be perceived as a person with equal rights in everyday practice and institutional processes – as a peer group as well as an individual.

Addendum: Practice-link on the developmental level

The initial question was analyzed both on a research level as well as on a developmental level, including different events based on creative participatory methods. Here, twelve topics of life became apparent, which are particularly important regarding the children's participation. Based on these areas, a dossier with a variety of materials was created in collaboration with the young people. This dossier will be connected to the research findings from our group discussions and vice versa.

“I actually know that things will get better”: The many pathways to resilience of LGBTQIA+ youth in out-out-of-home care.

Mr. Rodrigo González Álvarez (University of Groningen), Dr. Mijntje ten Brummelaar (University of Groningen), Dr. Mónica López López (University of Groningen)

Background: Research on LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, Queer, Intersexual, Asexual/Aromantic/Agender, and other sexualities) populations has traditionally focused on negative health outcomes and their individual determinants. This approach tends to neglect the importance of structural factors and the ways in which these populations overcome them to maintain their health (Gahagan & Colpitts, 2017). A resilience approach is an alternative that highlights how individuals and communities withstand and resolve stress and its negative consequences. Traditional resilience approaches have also been often criticized for their overly individualistic and narrow perspectives. However, new broader conceptualizations, such as the social ecology model of resilience, offer a more comprehensive way to understand resilience by incorporating their social and cultural components (Ungar, 2011). This wider take on resilience can especially be useful to understand the experiences of minoritized communities such as the LGBTQIA+.

Research on the lives and experiences of LGBTQIA+ children and youth in the Child Protection System (CPS) has also been centered on their negative experiences and outcomes. Often, LGBTQIA+ youth do not feel safe and affirmed in their out-of-home placements (Mallon, 2019). While in care, the placement and service needs of LGBTQIA+ youth are not always adequately addressed: they are treated less well than their non-LGBTQIA + peers and experience more placement breakdowns. They are exposed to the common challenges of the care system, and also, to a society that still discriminates based on sexual orientation and gender identity expression.

Objective: Using a social ecology resilience perspective, this study aims to delve into the multiple ways LGBTQIA+ youth living in care are resilient to the many challenges they face.

Method: This study made use of Audre´s project data. Audre project aimed to listen to the voices of LGBTQIA+ youth who have experienced out-of-home care in the Netherlands. We conducted thirteen semi-structured interviews with LGBTQIA+ youth growing up in care. We paid extra attention to the ethics of research with minoritized groups, always trying to keep a flexible, reflexive, and participative research process where the voices and perspectives of the participants were deemed of utmost relevance.

*Results:*The stories of LGBTQIA+ youth living in care show how they are (forced to be) strong and resilient to the multiple challenges they face. At the individual level, they implemented several self-relying strategies such as escaping, resisting, and fighting. At the relational level, they benefited from relationships that supported and empowered them. Also, at a relational level, the co-construction of a positive identity around their SOGIE was a source of resilience. Lastly, getting involved with their community in different ways, for example, by understanding and reflecting over social inequalities and engaging in their solutions, was also a pathway to resilience.

Discussions/conclusions: Shifting the research narrative from a deficit-oriented and individualistic approach to a narrative that emphasizes the strengths and importance of the social system is key to depict in a comprehensive and empowering way the lives of LGBTQIA+ youth in care. These results are valuable information to the designing of interventions to foster their individual, relational and social resources and to change the CPS into a safer, more welcoming, and affirmative environment for them; a place that collectively cultivates resilience.

“I had no one to talk to until ...” – Research project on phases of transition in the life of young refugees in Germany

Ms. Jelena Seeberg (HAWK Hildesheim), Dr. Hannah von Grönheim (HAWK Hildesheim), Prof. Christa Paulini, Prof. Dr. (HAWK Hildesheim)

We would like to present our research project which focuses on how social work can support the young refugees during the various transition phases they face in host societies – be it structurally, personally or socially.

If we talk about ”transitions in the life of young refugees“ we refer to the theory of transition developed by Norbert Elias (Elias 2000). According to the expression of power balances we look at young refugees neither as an autonomous group nor as dependent victims of the circumstances without any agency. We look especially at the period of arrival of young refugees until the period of consolidation and the transitions regarding the refugee status (Hargasser 2016: 35).

Our aim is to get more and valid information about the living situation and the challenges for young refugees in Lower Saxony - especially during phases of transition. We take into account that the adolescence is a very formative stage of development and connected with many changes for young people concerning their environment and their own personality. Additionally, young refugees might be confronted with the insecurity of their residence status due to the asylum procedure or with the end of the residential care by the German youth welfare-system. Within transition phases other challenges involve the experience of racism, language barriers due to a monolingual education system, social integration or living situations.

Our aims for the research project are to improve the knowledge concerning the necessary support for young refugees experiencing transitions and to develop guiding principles for the youth welfare professionals.

Within the context of our research project we developed a new methodological design for group discussions. While choosing our research methods, we thought about how to offer the young refugees (14-25 years old) a low-threshold context in which they feel heard. Hence, we aimed to design the group interviews as less guided as possible but also wanted to give every person in these very heterogeneous groups (accompanied and unaccompanied, different linguistic proficiencies etc.) the chance to arrange their thoughts, bring in their topics and express their experiences. On that basis, we developed a new methodological design for group discussions including a practical phase to give the young people the chance to visualize their thoughts with different materials. Based on pre-test interviews we developed special symbols, such as buildings, houses, smilies etc. Together with additional papers and pens, our interview partner can use the different materials in different ways, such as writhing, drawing and organizing structures in their own creative way. The results are then used as stimulus for the continuing group discussion. This new method enables us to focus on the perspective of the adolescents right from the beginning.

“I hope my voice is heard.” A mixed methods study of the quality of care experiences of youth in therapeutic residential care

Dr. Shamra Boel-Studt (Florida State University), Dr. Hui Huang (Florida International University)

Introduction: Historically, policies in the United States have reflected a movement away from placing youth in residential care. Such policies are promulgated by concerns over high costs and negative effects of residential placement. Yet, research on residential care is mixed with well-noted limitations preventing the development of well-informed policy and practice. Increasingly, child welfare stakeholders are recognizing the importance of including consumer perspectives as a key part of facilitating high-quality and effective services. Despite this, the youth perspective has been largely absent from the decision-making on policy and practice in residential care. Most existing knowledge of the youth experience in residential care is based on anecdotal accounts or derived from youth placed in a single service setting, leaving substantial gaps in the understanding of residential care experiences. In this mixed-method study, we present results of youth ratings of the quality of care in residential homes in the United States using a validated quality assessment and themes from youths’ open-ended responses reflecting on their experiences in residential care.

Methodology: We collected data from 450 youth placed in 127 different residential care programs in Florida who participated in the statewide pilot of the Group Care Quality Standards Assessment (GCQSA). Using the GCQSA, youth rated the quality of care in their current residential placements across seven domains: 1) assessment and service planning, 2) safe, positive living environment, 3) monitor and report problems, 4) family, culture, and spirituality, 5) program elements, 6) education and life skills, and 8) transition and discharge planning. We examined youths’ mean quality ratings and factors (e.g., age, gender, race, placement types) associated with quality ratings. Additionally, we conducted a content analysis of open-ended responses from a subset of 119 youth.

Findings: The majority of youth (86.9%) were placed in group homes (13.1% shelter). The mean age was 14.77 (+ 2.27) with a nearly equal number of females (50.9%) and males (48.6%). The majority were white (36.3%) or black (36%). The highest percentage of youth (23.8%) spent between 1-2 years in their current placement. Mean scores for the total GCQSA (1 = standards are not at all met, 5 = standards are completely met) indicated that youth felt the quality standards were mostly met (M = 4.28, + = .71). Ratings were lowest for Domain 1 (assessment and service planning) and highest for Domain 2 (safe, positive living environment). Bivariate analyses showed youth who spent more time in their placements (r = .217, p = .023) and who were placed in a group home versus shelter ($F = 133.8_{(1, 449)}$, $p < .000$) provided higher quality ratings. Youths’ open-ended responses indicated that they viewed their placements positively and felt connected with program staff/house parents. The most frequent types of negative comments focused on the environmental restrictions and feeling staff were unresponsive to their needs.

Discussion: The study results shed light on the quality of care experienced in residential settings from the youth perspective. In some regards, these results run counter to longstanding assumptions about the negative care experience within residential settings. Our findings lend credence to a more nuanced reality when the information is derived from multiple sources (i.e., 450 youth from 127 different group homes and shelters) and when using a validated assessment designed to measure quality of care. Of equivalent importance, the results point to areas that may be targeted for service improvements. We will discuss the alignment of these results with current policies within and beyond the United States along the importance of efforts to understand youth in residential care; ensuring their voices are reflected in the development of policy and practice in residential care.

“It’s mostly an alone feeling like I can’t go anywhere or do anything” - the subjective well-being of care leavers.

Prof. Julie Selwyn (The Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford)

In England, legislation (Children and Social work Act 2017) requires local authorities to pro-actively stay in touch with care leavers and for support to be provided from a personal advisor up to the age of 25 years. Consequently, local authorities remain in touch with most care leavers. While we know how many care leavers are in further education or are working, there are no national data collected on how care leavers feel about their own lives-their subjective well-being.

The research programme ‘Bright Spots’ and the ‘Your Life Beyond Care’ online surveys provide quantitative and qualitative information on the subjective well-being of care leavers (16-25yrs) . The survey was developed collaboratively with care leavers and in a partnership between Professor Julie Selwyn and Coram Voice (a children’s rights charity). Focus groups were held with 40 care leavers to identify from a care leavers’ perspective, “*What makes a good life?*” Young people’s responses were converted into survey questions that were piloted; cognitive interviews were completed; and the survey was then edited again before being rolled out for local authorities to distribute. The resulting questions are a mixture of *hedonic* (e.g. positive and negative emotions, overall life satisfaction) and *eudaimonic* indicators (whether the young person is feeling they are functioning well at an individual and interpersonal level). Five of the 40 questions provide the opportunity for care leavers to give a more expansive text response. Some of the questions in the survey are also asked in national surveys of young people in the general population who never entered care, thus enabling comparisons to be made.

The presentation will focus on some of the findings from this unique dataset. Here, I will focus on the views of 1,800 care leavers on their relationships (family, friends and key adults), feelings of loneliness and overall subjective well-being. The factors that were associated with low and high wellbeing will be examined and comparisons will be made with their peers in the general population.

“Knowing that I wasn’t alone”: Evaluation of a Sibling Camp for Youth in Care

Ms. Lauren McCarthy (University of Maryland School of Social Work), Dr. Bethany Lee (University of Maryland School of Social Work), Ms. Judith Schagrin (University of Maryland School of Social Work), Ms. Susan Loysen (Baltimore County Department of Social Services)

Objectives: Youth in out of home care are often separated from siblings and have limited opportunities for normative childhood experiences. Camp Connect was developed by a child welfare administrator in an urban city in the United States as a one-week summer camp experience for sibling groups to build memories, engage in growth-oriented activities, and support sibling relationships. This presentation will describe the creation and structure of Camp Connect as well as voices from youth/young adult campers and their counselors about the camp experience.

Methods: To understand the perspective of campers who spent at least one week at Camp Connect as well as counselors who volunteered at the camp, we conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with 10 former youth campers and 18 counselors. The interview focused on the most effective camp activities, the perceived impact of camp on personal development and interpersonal relationships, and recommendations for other professionals interested in creating a sibling camp for youth in care.

Each interview lasted about 25 minutes and was audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. Two independent raters reviewed the manuscripts and identified themes that appeared across multiple respondents. In the development of the themes and codebook, we separately considered the perspectives of the youth campers as compared to the counselors to identify themes that were consistent for both groups as well as unique to a respondent group.

Results: Themes from the interviews uncovered the key camp activities that were most valued from the perspectives of the youth as well as the counselors. These included challenging activities designed to build confidence, making crafts and other momentos the siblings exchanged, and traditional camp activities that allowed the youth to have fun together. In considering the impacts of camp, both campers and counselors described opportunities for personal and professional growth, a greater appreciation for their sibling relationships, and new insights about the care system. Finally, we identified best practices and suggestions for other program who may be interested in creating a summer camp experience for siblings of youth in care.

*Conclusions:*Although the youth campers and adult counselors identified many similar themes, the voices of the youth campers capture their perspectives on the value of this experience. In this sample, some of the youth who were once campers were later trained to be counselors and transitioned into this leadership role. These participants offered unique perspectives from their insights as both campers and counselors and demonstrated the potential for the camp to have lasting benefits and impacts on their development. In talking with the young adult campers, it was evident that nurturing sibling relationships among youth in care is complex and requires more focused attention than just a one-week camp experience. More attention needs to be paid to the resources necessary to intentionally engage sibling groups in care to build and maintain strong family ties.

“Life is a hustle:” Survival strategies of youth “aging out” of foster care

Dr. Lisa Schelbe (Florida State University)

Objectives: Youth “aging out” of foster care frequently struggle during the transition out of care and into adulthood. Consistently, research has found high rates of unemployment and homelessness and low rates of educational attainment among this population. The purpose of this study is to describe the struggles youth aging out face and to explore the strategies youth employ to survive.

Methods: This study is part of a larger ethnography of youth “aging out” of foster care which examines youth leaving care in a Mid-Atlantic urban county in the United States. In addition to over 800 hours of participant observation over two years, 92 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand the process of aging out. During data collection, there were interactions with over 100 youth and a couple dozen service providers. The focus of this study is on several youth. Data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach involving an inductive, iterative process of coding and memoing (Charmez, 2006).

Results: All of the youth aging out struggled to meet their basic needs. Many lacked stable housing; some resorted to “couch surfing” at friends’ home, dating someone to have temporary housing, or pooling resources to live in overcrowded apartments. Some stayed at shelters or in subsidized apartments. Frequently, youth did not have money to buy food or pay bills (i.e., phone, medical, car). Youth relied on government assistance and support from non-profits as well as support from romantic partners, family, friends, and acquaintances. They worked hard to survive, yet often their needs remained needs.

Youth were resourceful to make ends meet. “Hustling” often was described in terms of actions—selling drugs; “doing hair”; babysitting; selling illegally recorded CDs and DVDs; doing odd jobs; performing sexual acts; landscaping; shoveling snow in the winter; participating in medical testing; and selling stolen goods. These activities generated income or met their needs as sometimes they would do something in exchange for housing or food. There was a deeper understanding that a “hustle” was strategically doing whatever it took to meet one’s needs. It was a mindset one youth described as “every little thing you do in life, you have to think of how it’s gonna benefit you.” This mindset and innovative strategies youth employed contributed to their survival.

While most of the youth were employed, at least temporarily, wages were inadequate. Youth often had to find ways to augment their income. One young man who worked at McDonalds, sometimes engaged in illegal activities to make ends meet. Others did “side jobs” or worked “under the table.” Some youth resorted to selling drugs, which led to some youth’s involvement in the justice system. Several youth vocalized their wish to no longer be part of illegal activities, yet they felt stuck due to their past and not having viable options to provide for themselves and in several cases, their children.

The intersection of economic necessity and risks due to life circumstances and the neighborhoods in which youth lived created a series of barriers. Having “aged out” of foster care, the social networks of the youth were often limited. Even supportive people were in their lives, the people lack the resources to help youth. As youth aged out, fewer service providers were available to them. Out of necessity, youth lived in poorer neighborhoods where there were high levels of crime and violence. These communities offered few opportunities for youth and created additional challenges.

Conclusions: While youth may struggle during their transition out of care and into adulthood, they are resourceful and resilient. Youth employ a variety of strategies to survive as they negotiate the transitions.

“Multi problem families”, “overburdened mothers”, and where is the child? Physical violence and symbolic power of definition

Prof. Doris Bühler-Niederberger (University of Wuppertal), Prof. Lars Alberth (Leuphana University, Lüneburg)

In the socio-political handling of the problems of private life, two logics oppose each other. Historically, problems of the private sphere have been approached as a “policing the family.” The focus was on suitable housing conditions, which organized the family as such in terms of space, economical use of self-earned resources, a properly managed household, and thus the mother as a good housewife, while, if necessary, father functions could be taken over by public authorities. In this way, the family was (and remained) an essential element of social order, an order of the private, which – in its generational and gender hierarchy, and certainly also in its violent forms – was intended to support the order of public life as a socialization order. It was in this logic that social welfare institutions and professions arose, and only later and for the time being without a legal basis did violence against children come into view as a problem in need of public intervention. These two opposing logics – family order and protection of children from violence and abuse – were integrated as tasks and responsibilities in the same institutions and are still in conflict today – institutionalized in child and family welfare’s legal frameworks, professional codes, and interventions.

It was only in recent decades, that a sensitizing towards domestic violence and violence against children occurred and a turn towards an increased child-centered approach became tangible. CRC and increased demands for the participation of children have drawn attention to the opposing logics. Up until now, such child-centeredness remains mostly a declaration of intent and is often reduced to a question of normative convictions. This leads to claims of institutional neglect of both the suffering and agency of children, rendering the logic of policing the families a symbolic power and even institutional violence. It relies on a non-agentic view of the child as adults’ product and depending on their family. This goes along with a silencing/exclusion of the child’s voice in the definition of the problem. A focus on parents and family cohesion under the guise of “support” symbolically reinforces such a neglect of the second logic of violence. However, this new sensitivity towards the rights of the child may be brought up by clients or third parties.

In our contribution, we want to draw upon recent cases to analyze the application of different logics by professionals, adults, or children as victims. We want to contrast the logic of the “overburdened mother” (a concept of German social workers applied to mothers in child protection work) with the procedural logic of the multi problem families, regarding their respective impact to a child centered logic. As the “overburdened mother” epitomizes the first logic of “policing the family”, cases that fall into the category of the “multi-problem family” might be more available to the second logic “protection of children from violence”. Since the concept of the “multi-problem family” calls for professionals to further deliberate their decision-making, the negotiation of both logics on the level of individual cases is made possible. Such a process-oriented analysis of social problems work directs the attention towards the activities of the people involved and the respective shifts in the definition of the situation, i.e., changes in the definition of the families from cases in need of policing to ones troubled by abuse. Beyond tracing such crossings of definitory borders to collective action, our analysis also looks for the conditions which allow successful and persistent claims for shifts in the construction of the families as violent.

“My Whole Family is Not Really My Family” – Secure Care Shadows on Family and Family Practices among Young Adults and Their Family Members

Dr. Sofia Enell (Linnaeus University), Dr. Monika Wilinska (Jönköping University)

This study (based in Sweden) explores family practices and family displays among young adults with a history of secure care. Placement in secure care signifies critical interventions in young people’s relations both in and outside the institution, making this placement a special form of relational practice. We apply a relational perspective on families, which means that we understand family relations as fluid and liable to change. With this as a starting point, we engage with the concept of family within the context of secure care to explore the ways in which such care affects families, their understanding of family, and their everyday family practices.

The study is a follow-up of 16 young adults with experience of secure care. Almost ten years after the last interview, these 16 young adults were contacted again and after months of intense efforts at reaching out , 11 young adults (six men and five women, 21-26 years old) and 11 nominated family members agreed to participate. To help elucidate how secure care affects understandings of family and family practices, we use the metaphor of shadows. This metaphor emphasizes the ways in which the experiences of secure care may lurk through images of family and family life years after the placement. By using this metaphor, we discern three broad areas (emotional chaos; revised and negotiated family positions and; doing and undoing family) in which secure care shadows revealed themselves providing different forms of shadows where some were more distinct while others were more difficult to grasp. Of the more apparent shadows were the recalled horror of secure care reflecting family displacement and the pressure to make family work reflecting the restricting practices in secure care where only (birth) parents were considered as family and relations of (natural) importance to the young people. These shadows may impair an understanding of family as something relational, created and maintained through various practices. In this sense, the context of secure care does not seem to support young people’s embeddedness in relationships other than to parents. Nor does the institutional context support the idea of intertwined life biographies with relations other than parents. The young adults’ strategy of solitude and consequential undoing of family life could have been avoided if different types of relations had been embraced and supported during secure care. Consequently, both parents and young adults shared stories of a struggle between their morally ingrained images of family and their (young adults) experiences of family members failing to reach this ideal, or of being the one(s) (parents) failing.

The title of this paper contains a quotation from one of the young adults, Paula, who states “*My whole family is not really my family.*” The excerpt manifests a persistence of culturally and socially shaped family norms that emphasize the parent-child relationship. At the same time, to Paula, family membership is something that one has to qualify for through actions – one has to earn and deserve it. The narratives seem to be impregnated with the idea that ‘family’ means a parent-child relationship, and they demonstrate that it is difficult to go beyond such an understanding. In this way we can also see how secure care casts shadows on the talk of young adults about doing and undoing, i.e. giving up family relations.

The shadows cast by secure care are shown to be strong, which testifies to the tremendous impact that institutional placement has on the relational and family landscape, stretching far beyond the immediate situation of being locked up. We call for more attention to the perversity of secure care arrangements, at both policy and institutional levels.

“Olhos nos Olhos – Qual a tua história”, a pilot project to promote transcultural and religious skills on young people.

Dr. Elisete Diogo (Catholica University of Lisbon - CRCW; Instituo Politécnico de Portalegre; CICS.NOVA, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa)

In a global world, Europe and therefore Portugal have received migrants from a range of countries. Adults and unaccompanied minors once in Portugal must be integrated and included in the society. However, migrants are not always welcome and therefore this process of social inclusion tend to be as well succeed as expected.

In order to face cultural and religious conflicts and to promote tolerance among young people, a pilot project called “Olhos nos olhos – Qual a tua história” has been created in a heterogeneous and complex social context. It involved 12 students from diverse backgrounds (Romani people, Africa, Brazil, Eastern European) Several activities were already conducted as life-stories, roll play, video record, group dynamics, intergenerational photographs, photograph exhibitions, visits to a mosque and a church.

This study aims to acknowledge and understand the participants perspective about the project and the activities carry out. Addressing an exploratory approach, the methodology of this qualitative research is based on the documental analyses, semi-structured interviews between participants and video records analysis. The analysis of the empirical data is inspired by the work of Charmaz (2006; 2014) in the scope of Grounded Theory, using applied software, MaxQDA 2018. An exploratory study seems necessary to obtain relevant data for further investigation on the impact of this typology of projects, specifically for the construction of solid programs for the training of students and teachers.

Several questions were asked to the participants, including family paths, racist histories, cultural issues position, transcultural relationships benefits.

The results are being analysed, and preliminary findings show that young people are found of the use of informal education approach. They feel that the activities promoted by the project impact them very much, made them more tolerant, solidary, and not so focused in personal attributes of the other, mainly differences.

As implications for practice, it seems that the project has potential for being replicated and to use its outputs for the creation of a kit of pedagogical tolls.

“Surviving Not Thriving”: The Perceptions and Experiences of Health Among Young People with a Lived Experience in Out-of-Home Care.

Dr. Rachael Green (Monash), Prof. Helen Skouteris (Monash University), Ms. Madelaine Smales (Monash University)

Aim: Young people living in out-of-home care (OoHC) experience higher rates of physical, social, developmental, and mental health concerns than their same aged peers in the general population. There is also growing recognition of the importance of listening to the voices of young people regarding decisions about their life, including their health. Despite this recognition, a review of the literature highlighted that the voices of YP in OoHC are not well represented in research examining their health status and/or health needs. The overall aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of health among young people who have previously lived in OoHC.

Method: The sample included individuals with a lived experience of OoHC (i.e. kinship care, foster care, residential care, and other forms of alternative care) who were 18 years of age or older. Semi-structured interviews were used to give freedom to the participants and allow them to articulate and reflect on their own unique experiences and perceptions of health care whilst in care. To ensure integrity in encompassing the voice of young people and truly exploring and addressing topics that were deemed important to them, the study protocol was co-designed and developed in consultation with a group of care leavers. This group comprised of three females and one male. In collaboration with the young people, feedback was sought on: (1) the relevance and appropriateness of the overall study design; (2) the structure and design of the study participant materials, including recruitment flyers, the explanatory statements, and consent forms; and (3) the semi-structured interview schedule. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via the phone and were between 30-90 minutes in duration. All interviews were audio recorded with the participants’ consent to be later transcribed by a third-party transcription service for qualitative analysis. Ten young people participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results: Key findings uncovered in this study indicate that: (1) the health needs of young people in OoHC are often not addressed adequately; (2) the OoHC system presents numerous barriers to nurturing and improving young people’s health outcomes; (3) young people recognise the importance of, yet lack opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their health; (4) health needs of young people in care are ongoing and continue to persist or worsen once they leave care; and (5) carers require significant additional support, education, and training to better recognise and address young people’s health needs.

Conclusion: The OoHC system has the opportunity to intervene early and foster good health outcomes for young people. However, the current findings suggest that young people seem to be leaving care with worse health outcomes than when they entered OoHC. It is recommended that professional development is offered to carers and workers to help them recognise, manage and support the health needs of young people in their care. This should be offered in a way that recognises the benefits of preventive approaches and upskills them to ensure young people are adequately educated and prepared to manage their health needs independently (i.e., knowing how to access appropriate health services). It is also important that young people are provided with opportunities to be heard and given the agency to participate in decision making that affects their health (e.g. co-design). This study has demonstrated that a qualitative and collaborative design to research is a highly appropriate and effective way to engage young people and gain an in-depth understanding of their experience of health and the complexities that surround improved health outcomes for this population.

“The child’s view” as presented in foster care research: A discussion of challenges

Dr. Jeanette Skoglund (UiT - The Arctic University of Norway), Prof. Amy Holtan (UiT - The Arctic University of Norway), Prof. Renee Thørnblad (UiT - The Arctic University of Norway)

Background

While the wellbeing and health of children in foster care have been central topics in foster care research since the very beginning, previous approaches were essentially “research on”, rather than “research with” children. The last two decade, however, we have witnessed an upsurge in research including the views, opinions and experiences of children and youth growing up in different foster care settings. This shift is not unique to foster care research – it is a characteristic of children’s research more generally (Greene & Hogan, 2005; James, Prout, & Jenks, 1998).

Different ways of understanding children’s voices

In this paper, we draw attention to how data from qualitative interviews with children is understood and presented in foster care research. More specifically, we focus on the epistemological positions underpinning current research where children’s perspectives are included. Epistemological understandings relate to how knowledge can be created and communicated (Denzin & Guba, 2011). In qualitative research, there is a range of epistemological positions (Mason, 1996). However, for the sake of this paper, we will make a distinction between two main types, namely a positivist and a constructivist epistemological position. From a positivist position, children’s perspectives or views are understood to reflect what children “really think”. In the positivist view, it is thought that children come to an interview with a set of pre-existing views and through the right techniques, the researcher can “gather” these “inner truths”. In other words, data collection is thought of as a neutral process “of gathering pre-existing facts that are unmediated by our perceptions and unchanged by our practices of description and representation” (Greene & Hogan, 2011, p. 175). From a constructivist position, on the other hand, the opinions, views and experiences in which children share during the interview, are understood as constructed rather than discovered. Instead of understanding the research interview as a providing the researcher with a “clear” window through which children’s experiences can be seen, children views are regarded as a co-constructed product.

Aim and approach

Whichever position researchers take on will have major consequences for the research process as a whole. In the qualitative foster care literature, different epistemological positions are represented. However, a large proportion of these studies reflect a positivist position. The major aim of this paper is to lift up and discuss some of the major challenges this involve, with particular focus on the unintended consequences it can have for children themselves. As a basis for discussion, we draw on qualitative longitudinal data from our longitudinal research project Outcomes and experiences of foster care (1999-2019).

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“TO BE PROUD OF ME” - A new framework to map deeper the structure of children’s needs with pathways to practical application

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The origin of this paper roofs in contradictions between the wish of help to children in staff in residential care and their several reactions showing a misunderstanding of children’s situation’s specialties.

This paper presents a newly developed framework which aims to be able to increase the cognitive skills of staff to understand better children’s behavioral background offering a logical structure along which we may map more transparently the deep needs and interest of children living in residential care.

We describe shortly the theoretical background of the developed frame where from it has been derived – namely on a linked and mixed way from Niklas Luhmann’s System Theory and from the Participation Theory of Communication developed in Hungary by Özséb Horányi. We present how it is applicable to the social aid area, especially for the residential childcare field.

During the application, we focus on mapping a special part of children’s cognitive representations about what factors along they evaluate their situations in their life – even in a hidden, unaware way. To make it clear, in the derived frame we focus on Luhmann’s “medium” concept. The mediums are that binary “codes” along which a system (in that case a person) can construct a meaning to stimuli coming from his or her environment, as part of his or her biological, physical, mental resources, say “preparedness” for being able to cope with life’s situations. We will demonstrate that the preparedness roofs in the past life-experiences and it has a crucial effect on present life management.

For transfer from the abstract into practical, we present the research design along we aim to discover and identify these representations of mediums. The research design is based on a complex semi-structured retrospective interview with adult care leavers containing inter alia a semi-conducted narrative life storytelling part and the Satisfaction with Life Survey and its factor’s personal implementation. Analyzing the data, we make qualitative content analysis focusing on coding the clues of the presence of these mediums in the verbal manifestations.

Although the project is in the “pilot phase”, the first results show a picturesque image of findings. We can assume on a grounded way, that children have several medium they use on a “polyphonic”, parallel way, which could be the followings: physical safety, emotional safe, be important to someone, to be expert (feel competency) and the right and reason to be alive. Derive from prior Luhmannian researcher’s concept we can say, that “help” can be identified as a “meta-category” which’ parts are the mentioned mediums. We assume, that mediums have parameters differing on the geographical-cultural background.

The map of these mediums all together with the description of its working dynamism can serve efficiently the development of further staff training’ content to help the professionals enlarge their own “preparedness” into solving professional situations in residential care. The planned further part of the research projects – focus groups to map parameters, supplemented with focus groups for staff to map whether their representations differ from children’s one, and international or cross-cultural comparison – should provide additional evidence and confirmation to serve the aim of the project.

“We Need That Person That Doesn’t Give up on Us”: Foster Youth Perspectives on Social Support in Post-Secondary Education

Dr. Colleen Katz (Hunter College), Dr. Jennifer Geiger (University of Illinois at Chicago)

Background

Research shows that former foster youth face significant challenges in a number of domains, including education. Statistics show that almost a third (28.8%) of the population in the United States obtains a 4-year college degree while it is estimated that 3-5% of foster care alumni successfully complete an undergraduate degree. Among foster youth who do enroll in a postsecondary education program, many are unprepared and struggle socially, academically, and in meeting their basic needs. Studies have shown that supportive relationships with caring and trusted adults are crucial to youth pursuing higher education. However, little is known about the individuals who foster youth choose as social supports and about the qualities of these relationships. This study aims to provide an in-depth examination of these relationships from the perspective of the students with a history of foster care.

Methods

This study involved the qualitative analysis of interviews as part of a larger mixed-methods study on the barriers to post-secondary educational engagement and persistence for foster youth in a large urban city in the Northeastern United States. The sample included youth between the ages of 18 and 22 who had a Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) prior to or at the time of the interview/s. Youth were interviewed between one and three times over the course of their first year as emancipated adults. They were asked about the social support they were receiving at the time of each interview; to identify the three people who were providing the most meaningful support and to explain how such support was provided. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted to identify and describe emergent themes in the data on social support. After conducting descriptive analysis of the participants, researchers generated initial codes, then identified and defined key themes.

Results

Fifteen young adults participated in the study. Twelve participants identified as female, with the majority (ten) identifying as African American. Findings from the analysis of interviews with 15 participants revealed four overarching themes: (1) drop-off of formal supports, (2) high stakes of postsecondary education programs, (3) friendships and peer support, and (4) self-reliance. When discussing formal supports, several youth in this study articulated how such supports helped with identification of and enrollment in postsecondary education programs. Participants emphasized the helpfulness of these formal supports, but some also described a notable shift in their availability once youth were enrolled and had begun their programs. Further, youth reported that they feared making a mistake and being asked to leave the program, creating high stakes for those in those programs. Youth described various sources of formal and informal supports and how these relationships helped with accessing and succeeding in postsecondary education settings and the qualities of those relationships and relied on the trusting, unconditional and flexible nature of these relationships. Several participants described an important source of support and guidance that came from within themselves, that served as a means of self-protection and pride.

Conclusions

This study provided insight into the benefits of social support during postsecondary education, a particularly challenging time for young people with foster care experiences. Findings showed how different sources of social support provided different types of social support, advice, and advocacy. This highlights the importance of offering a variety of ways and sources for youth to access social support while in postsecondary education settings. Participants in the study relied heavily on the support from professionals, who have the potential of reaching youth before and after they have entered a postsecondary education program, as well as family and friends, which has important implications for social work intervention and education.

“We need to understand what’s going on because it’s our life”: children and young people’s everyday conversations about care

Prof. Debbie Watson (University of Bristol), Dr. Eleanor Staples (University of Bristol), Ms. Katie Riches (University of Bristol)

Children and young people who live away from birth families (through adoption or being in care) need an understanding of their life story, including reasons for removal from birth family to process what has happened to them and to develop a secure identity. We report data produced with care experienced children and young people using a creative sandboxing method capturing hopes and fears for conversations about care in sand scenes. The themes presented emphasise the need for care-experienced children and young people to be supported to engage in ‘difficult conversations’ about their lives in warm, open and responsive ways.

There were 78,150 children and young people in care in England in 2019 (Department for Education [DfE], 2019)- making up around 1% of the population. Of these, in 2017/18, 63% were reportedly looked after due to abuse or neglect (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children [NSPCC], 2019). In 2019 the number of children who were adopted was 3,570 (DfE, 2019). Many care-experienced children and young people report gaps in biographical memory, which has been linked to poor mental health outcomes in adolescence (Selwyn et al., 2015). Having a coherent narrative of adverse experiences has been associated with recovery from trauma, particularly when there is disruption of the narrative (Jirek, 2017). Using life stories as part of identity formation is effective because people use narratives to present themselves as someone who remains the same yet is simultaneously always changing (Bamberg, 2011). For children in care or leaving care due to adoption, returning home or ‘aging out’, who may have experienced frequent change and limited opportunities to form enduring attachments, this can be challenging (Ward, 2011; Watson et al., 2018). Policy and law have responded to this need to some extent. For children permanently placed for adoption the*Adoption and Children Act* (DfE, 2002) mandates the production of a life story book by the placing authority. In 2015 the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) provided guidance that all children in care, adopted or in special guardianship had the right to access information about their past through life story work (NICE, 2015). Whilst there is a plethora of practice guidance around this (Hooley et al., 2016), especially the creation of life story books (Watson et al., 2015), there is little emphasis on the importance of conversations about past family life or the skills to do it effectively. There is recognition that it is a highly complex task (Coman et al., 2016) and one which is almost always driven by social workers or support workers, only sometimes with help from foster carers (Willis and Holland, 2009). Most of the direct work undertaken also focuses on the ‘big story’ which we suggest can memorialise the past in unhelpful ways. Instead we emphasise a focus on everyday life story conversations where it is possible to slowly granulate a picture of the past. This requires parents/ carers and children to have the confidence to have these conversations and to enable reconciliation of truth and emotion (Baynes, 2008) which can hopefully lead to more positive outcomes.

In this paper we explore the experiences of care-experienced children and young people (aged 10-29 years) about the difficult conversations they have had and how these could be improved.

“Worth being cared for”: Implications for policy and practice – A study of outcomes of open adoption from out-of-home care

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Introduction

This paper explores the policy and practice implications drawn from a research study of Australian children adopted from foster care over a twenty-six year period (1986-2012). The sample was all children adopted from foster care in a specialist permanency program, ranging in age at the time of study from middle- adulthood to pre-school age. The Barnardos Find-a-Family program, specialising in placement of large sibling groups and supporting ongoing face-to-face contact between adoptees and their families of origin (open adoption), targeted children with high levels of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) while living with birth parents, and sometimes increased vulnerability incurred in the foster care system.

Objectives

The paper analyses findings about the characteristics, experiences and long-term outcomes for adoptees and their adoptive parents. It will examine implications for child protection practice, foster care planning and timely decision making for children in foster care, preparation of children for adoption, training of adoptive parents, and contact policies in the context of post adoption support.

Method

The study was a collaboration between the University of Oxford, Loughborough University and Barnardos Australia. It was conducted in a foster care program for children legally removed from their parents’ care by a Children’s Court, as a result of child protection concerns. This program then placed children in permanent foster care prior to consideration of adoption.

To gain information on subject children and their birth and adoptive parents prior to adoption, the researchers harvested data from administrative records for the entire cohort of adoptees (n=210). To understand the experience of adoption and outcomes, the researchers conducted online surveys (54 adoptees and 86 adoptive parents) and in-depth interviews with adoptees and adoptive parents (20 adoptees and 21 adoptive parents). To ensure transparency, analysis was conducted independently of the program.

Results

The study showed that open adoption increased stability for many children and its importance in enhancing adoptees’ sense of belonging and security. It also showed the importance of timeliness in child protection and care planning decisions in limiting further damage to already vulnerable children.

The majority of adoptive families were found to be supportive of their adopted children into middle-adulthood, in contrast to foster care experiences. The study indicated the need for adoptive parents to be well prepared for the impact of the children’s experiences, prior to adoption.

Contact was shown to be important to adoptees and adoptive families; however they may require access to additional support over the medium term. Contact with siblings, grandparents and extended family was highly significant.

The results provide significant information for current adoption policy, including that the adoptees were appropriately removed from birth parents, that adoptees had a strong sense of identity as a direct result of open adoption, and that children’s interests were the primary decision-making focus of placement for open adoption.

Conclusions

Adoption has an important role to play in achieving residential, psychological and legal permanency for vulnerable abused and neglected children. It is particularly important for children with high ACEs who have become even more vulnerable as a result of being placed in foster care systems. Adoptive families can be found for these children, but adequate preparation is essential.

Practitioners need to make timely decisions and plans which include monitoring progress and reducing moves in foster care. Practitioners should encourage ongoing open contact with family of origin, which can be beneficial for many children; however individual decisions need to be made and it is critically important that children's concerns are heard. Practitioners need to have clarity about the purpose of ongoing family contact, with intensive preparation of adoptive parents. Some adoptive families may need access to ongoing specialist support.

”Another one of these experts who doesn’t have a clue“ - Including formerly institutionalized individuals in preparing a study on historic infant care practices in Switzerland

Mrs. Clara Bombach (Marie Meierhofer Children’s Institute), Dr. Patricia Lannen (Marie Meierhofer Children’s Institute)

Background: Many of the child welfare policies and practices in Switzerland before law reform in 1981 were rather invasive and were exercised under a legal context that sometimes threatened the integrity and basic human rights (see Hauss, Gabriel, & Lengwiler 2018). Including individuals who have been affected by such measures themselves in the research process has been vigorously requested and reported in recent studies in Switzerland (see Hauss, 2018, p. 219; Seglias, 2018, p. 30f.; Wigger, 2018; Ziegler, 2018b, p. 71; Ziegler, Hauss, & Lengwiler, 2018, p. 12). While social sciences have issued a commitment to such a participatory model, there is a dearth of good practices and precedents available to follow and use as guidance (see Lengwiler 2018, p. 175). A study, carried out by Dr. Marie Meierhofer in the late 1950s/early 1960s in Zurich, examined the living conditions of approximately 400 children in infant care institutions (“orphanages”). Marie Meierhofer wanted to know how the children were doing and how their needs were responded to. At that time, the infants’ behaviour was observed. Today, 60 years later, they are contacted and asked to join the study again and make their voices heard. They are now about 60 years old and a follow-up study is currently underway.

Methods: Four individuals who were placed in institutions as infants themselves have been included in the process to prepare the study. Using focus interviews and Think-aloud Methods, the interviewees commented on the planned research process at two time points: a) on how to contact the cohort and b) to finalize the assessment instruments. Data was analyzed using content analysis (Mayring, 2000).

Results: Analysis revealed four types of findings: a) results primarily relevant for our study at hand b) results relevant for research on welfare practices in general c) results relevant for future efforts to include individuals with similar experience to the target cohort d) results related to the potential for capacity strengthening of researcher through such inclusion.

Conclusions: This effort showed that inclusion of individuals with similar experiences to the target cohort is feasible and that it significantly adds to the quality and success of a research project.

Authors Index