Foster Care, Childhood and Parenting in Contemporary Europe

Tuija Suikkanen-Malin & Minna Veistilä (eds.)

Contents

Presentations of the authors

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Foster Care, Childhood and Parenting in Contemporary Europe

Minna Veistilä

Introduction

Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences has had the pleasure of co-operating with several European universities for decades now. The co-operation has mainly included student and teacher exchange, but also e.g. international weeks and common research and development projects. The idea of this book first emerged after one of our teacher's, senior lecturer Tuija Suikkanen-Malin's experiences during her teacher exchange period in Poland. She pointed out to our teacher group, that our colleagues all over Europe struggle with the same problems of foster care than we do in Finland, and that they have found some interesting answers as well. This brought us to the idea of collecting these struggles and experiences into a book.

Foster care is a multilayered and complex area of social work with children and families. This book contributes to the contemporary discussion of foster care in three parts. First, it introduces how there are several ways of organizing foster care, focusing on four different European countries: Italy, Slovakia, Spain and Turkey. Then we continue with a closer look at the most important persons involved: the children and the childhood they live in foster care. Big questions are posed in this part of the book: What does it actually mean to be maltreated as a child? How can children and young people be helped? What do children themselves think about foster care? The third part of the book then focuses on parenting and parenthood, bringing up important issues of values, attitudes, shared parenting and encountering.

On behalf of the editors of this book, I wish the reader many meaningful and thought-provoking moments with the articles. I also wish to give our warmest thanks to all the devoted authors of the articles, as well as to the excellent peer reviewers. All the articles of this book have been blind-reviewed. The writers carry sole responsibility of the language, contents and concepts of the articles. The editors have changed some technical details and compressed some parts of the articles. Special thanks also to our colleagues in Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, Harri Mäkinen, Pekka Malvela and Jaana Poikolainen, for your kind help during the publishing process. Foster care is worth these efforts.

Part I:

Organizing Foster Care in Different European Countries

Cinzia Mattu & Stefano Chessa

Foster care in Italy

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of children taken away from their family of origin and subsequently involved in intra or hetero familiar foster care as well as in residential care is a complex reality which testifies, on one side, the fragility of families as well as the social, cultural and economic crisis of a territory and, on the other side, the efforts to intervene on behalf of male and female children in situations of serious prejudice in their family environment. (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali 2014.)

Studies and research on the family have long shown clearly its double meaning: as primary group that plays a vital role in children's socialization and in deepening emotional ties among its members but also as social institution pervaded of models that regulate the behavior of its members and, at the same time, that link this behavior with broader meaning's contexts. (Cooley 1909; Berger, & Berger 1972.)

In Italy, the *Legge quadro per la realizzazione del sistema integrato di interventi e servizi sociali* no. 328/2000 (framework law for the implementation of the integrated system of interventions and social services) transposes the double meaning of the family recognizing its parental functions (education and personal care) as well as its social functions (social cohesion, associations, mutual-help, adoption, foster care) and, consequently, identifying the family as one of the co-actors of the Italian welfare system and its role of community resource. (Franzoni & Anconelli 2003; Ministero del Lavoro, della Salute e delle Politiche Sociali 2009.)

Intervene on behalf of children therefore means not only operate in situations where the family is not able to take care of children's growth but it also means to prepare social and educational policies able to address the daily needs of families supporting them in facing the changes that, in our country, have significantly affected families since the sixties. (Franzoni & Anconelli 2003.)

Article 31 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic asserts the principle that the family must not only be helped with economic benefits but also through interventions that would enable it to play its role: that is what the Parliament from the Law no. 184/1983 try to substantiate. The child's right to have his/her "own" family, or in the alternative, to have a "suitable" family leads to profound changes in the entire legal framework of child protection and, in particular, leads to a drastic change in perspective about the nature and function of the foster care regulatory scheme.

Foster care in Italy currently (the latest official data are those reported at December 31, 2012) involves 28,449 children between 0 and 17 years living outside the family of origin, in foster families or in residential communities. Figure 1 shows a progressive withdrawal of foster care after the peak recorded in 2007.

*Figure 1 – Children and adolescents ages 0–17 outside the family of origin –
Years 1998/99, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012*
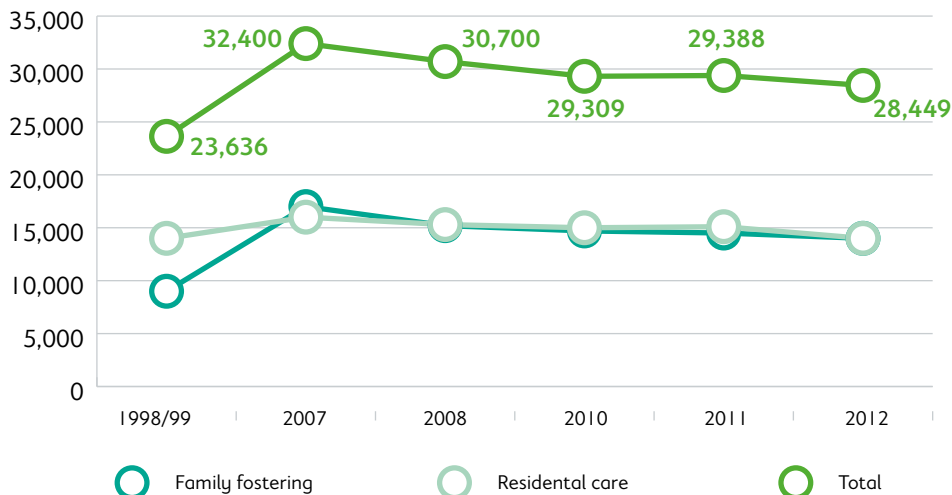
Data shows that there is a national average of 2.8 children and adolescents living outside the family of origin per thousand residents between 0 and 17 years of age, albeit in an environment that presents important regional differences: regions such as Liguria and Sicilia have a foster care ratio equal to or greater than 3.5, while regions such as Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Campania and Abruzzo have a foster care ratio of 2 or less.

The evaluation of different quantitative spread of the phenomenon should also be considered on the basis of the relationship between foster care and residential care: also in this case there are important territorial differences (values much higher than unit indicate situations more in line with regulations of the Law no. 149/2001, id est the preference for the foster family rather than for the residential care): Piemonte and Toscana (2), Liguria (1.8), Sardegna (1.5) show values greatly above parity threshold, while Province of Trento, Abruzzo, Basilicata, Molise, and Sicilia a significantly lower value (0.5).

With regard to the age distribution of minors in foster family data confirm the substantial prevalence of the experience during adolescence; an evident gender balance (males 51%, females 49%); as well as an equally evident balance between hetero familiar and intra familiar experience (respectively 53% and 47%) with persistent strong regional data variability characterized by a significantly lower ratio of hetero familiar fostering in the southern regions than in central and northern ones.

Residential care for children and adolescents is ensured through a diversified service offering in the territory in which - despite the regional differences, derived from different regulations - prevail on average socio-educational communities (47%) followed by family communities (17%) and care services for child / parent (12%).

The aspect that most characterizes the residential care is the highest incidence of foreign children (31%; doubling incidence compared to 1998), that affects strongly on age character-

Figure 2 – Children and adolescents outside the family of origin per 1,000 residents aged 0–17 – at 31/12/2012

- >3.5
- from 3.0 to 3.5
- from 2.0 to 2.9
- <2.0
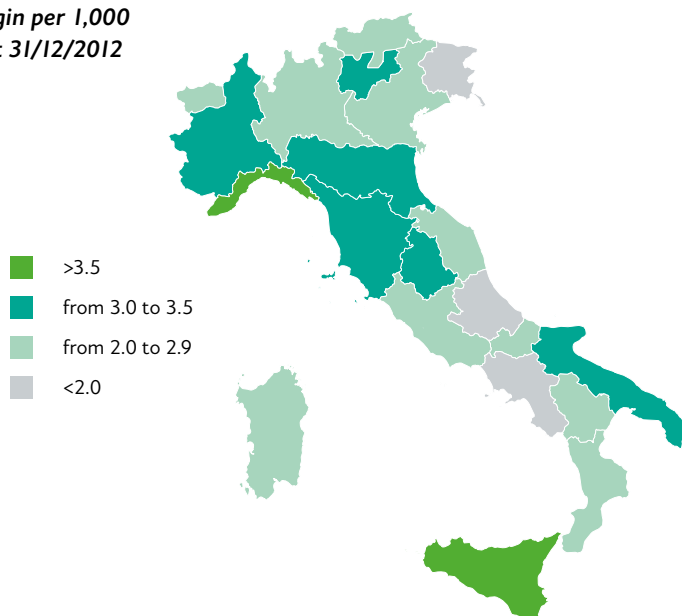
istics (higher incidence of age group 15–17 years) and on gender (predominantly male component, amounting to 60%).

Official data shows that on the total number of Italian minors living outside their parental nucleus at 31 December 2011 (latest available disaggregated data) in foster care outside kinship accounted for three quarters of the total (51% of children in residential care plus 25% in hetero familiar fostering) counter to a residual 24% of intra familiar fostering.

The regional breakdown shows a strong territorial inhomogeneity with a very wide range of variation: in Liguria, the region with the largest number of children living outside their family on child population, the percentage of children and adolescents who do not live with their relatives (outside the family, both in hetero familiar fostering and in residential care) corresponds to almost the whole sample (90%) while in Sardegna it corresponds to less than half of the sample (44%).

These data and evidence from various sources shows that foster-care in Italy is not a practice homogeneously widespread throughout the country as well as it is not yet an established practice. Accordingly to this evidence professional social workers and other

Figure 3 – Children and adolescents n family fostering per age group (percentages) – at 31/12/2012
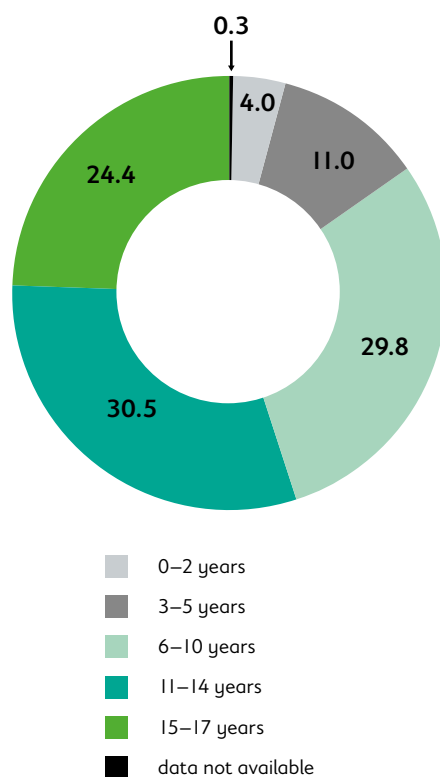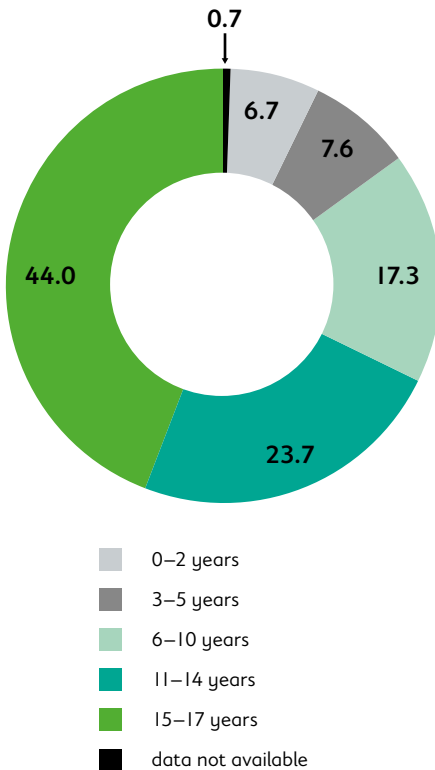

0.3

4.0

11.0

29.8

30.5

24.4

- 0–2 years
- 3–5 years
- 6–10 years
- 11–14 years
- 15–17 years
- data not available

Figure 4 – Children and adolescents n residental care per age group (percentages) – at 31/12/2012

- 0–2 years
- 3–5 years
- 6–10 years
- 11–14 years
- 15–17 years
- data not available

social professionals have carried out, during the last decades, various specific training activities all over the country in order to define a common framework of theoretical/practical knowledge.

This article analyses policy and practice regimes of foster-care in Italy outlining the main aspects of the Italian legislation both at national and regional level; focusing on the role and functions of the involved public actors (Territorial Health and Social Services, Courts, Schools) as well as of the private ones (Associations and other Third Sector organizations); reflecting on the way of turning the recipients of foster care (child and family of origin, foster family) into protagonists.

This article also outlines methodology and procedures adopted in everyday life in one of the Italian Regions, Sardegna, which has a Statute of special autonomy, with particular reference to: promotion of a foster-care culture; educational planning; time, tools and types of support enabled; strategies used to link operational practices to the National Foster Care Guidelines.

FOSTER CARE: NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND EXPERIENCE OF AUTONOMOUS REGION OF SARDINIA

In Italian judicial system, the foster care institution is specifically regulated on detail in articles 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Law no. 184 of 1983 "*Disciplina dell'Adozione e dell'Affidamento dei minori*", then amended by Law no. 149 of 2001 "*Diritto del Minore ad una famiglia*". According to the Law, the social service is the main actor responsible for the implementation, if necessary, of foster care intervention. The law does not indicate the conditions under which a child is considered not living in a suitable family environment and not even what is needed to refer to assess whether the situation is only temporary, resulting in foster care, or not temporary, resulting in adoption.

By Law no. 184 the legislator attempted to give substance to the principle embodied in article 31 of the Italian Constitution realizing, finally, that a person in the developmental age needs for proper development of his individual and social personality, an adequate family environment (Moro 2008). It was reversed the overall recourse to the children's institutionalization typical of the Fascist period and the first decades following the end of II World War. This Law asserts the idea that children not adequately supported by family able to help them in the growth, should grow up in another family, or at best, in a structure able to assure them family warmth.

Consequently the legislator, in accordance with art. 2 of Law no. 149/2001, decided the closure of orphanages.

Region	Minors in intra familiar foster-ing (number)	Minors in hetero familiar fostering (number)	Minors in residental care (number)	TOTAL	Foster care minors per 1,000 resident minors	Minors in intra familiar fostering (percentage on total)
Piemonte	677	687	823	2,187	3.2	31.0%
Valle d'Aosta	23	14	24	61	2.9	37.7%
Lombardia	725	1,549	2,250	4,524	2.8	16.0%
Trentino Alto Adige	110	132	357	599	3.0	18.4%
Veneto	442	656	900	1,998	2.4	22.1%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	74	79	200	353	1.9	21.0%
Liguria (*)	109	571	380	1,060	4.9	10.3%
Emilia Romagna	343	821	1,290	2,454	3.6	14.0%
Toscana	497	594	630	1,721	3.1	28.9%
Marche	96	197	421	714	2.9	13.4%
Umbria	95	125	250	470	3.4	20.2%
Lazio (*)	684	476	1,400	2,560	2.8	26.7%
Abruzzo (*)	64	46	240	350	1.7	18.3%
Molise (*)	21	9	65	95	2.0	22.1%
Campania	811	289	1,650	2,750	2.4	29.5%
Puglia	747	303	1,100	2,150	3.0	34.7%
Basilicata (*)	54	36	196	286	3.0	18.9%
Calabria (*)	171	209	500	880	2.6	19.4%
Sicilia	861	440	2,050	3,351	3.7	25.7%
Sardegna (*)	381	179	265	825	3.4	46.2%
TOTAL	**6,986**	**7,411**	**14,991**	**29,388**	**2.9**	**23.8%**

The child's right to be looked after by their own family, or in alternative, by a suitable family, has generated a deep change on protection system and a change of perspective about the nature and function of that institution. The foster care is, in fact, a temporary action that allows health and social services as well as foster family to work actively during foster time to recover the family of origin's environment. The Law no. 184/1983 anticipated the child's right to grow up and be educated in their own family, right established later in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, by the European Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Fostering has been differently developed in the national territory and Foster Care Guidelines offer a comprehensive framework for principles, content and implementation methodologies. These Guidelines are organized in form of "recommendations" for all those (regional and local administrators, social and health workers, citizens etc.) interested in improving and qualifying family foster care. Obviously the Guidelines cannot replace Regional laws regulating foster care in each Region.

At the basis there is a positive view of the possibility of personal transformation, concept empirically validated by the positive experiences realized in the last decades and the recent studies on resilience (Ius & Milani 2009), from which it is noted that children are able to positively cope with traumatic events of various kinds and intensity when they are supported by a social network within which they develop meaningful interpersonal relationships and get effective support for growth.

With reference to the field of social policies, and in particular those relating to children and adolescents, the Regions and the Provinces have played a decisive role since the '90s, thanks to the introduction of some basic national regulations. The reform of Title V of the Constitution, made by the Constitutional Law no. 3 of 18 October 2001, has conferred exclusive legislative power to the Regions in the field of social policies. This has resulted in a gradual and substantial decentralization of these policies, certainly closer and more corresponding to issues arising from the various territories, very different from each other.

This reform marked the transfer of legislative power related to social care from the State to the Regions and Autonomous Provinces. The State has retained only the task of defining the essential levels of performances concerning the protection of civil and social rights, task which, in the minds of the legislator of the Constitution in 2001, should have been enough to ensure effective uniformity throughout the country with respect to protection of civil and social rights, but to date, it has not been satisfactorily realized because of the economic crisis which afflicts the Regions and local authorities.

The Regions have found themselves moving on a new ground, subject only to instructions contained in the framework Law no. 328/2000: the Regions have had to issue specific norms to arrange the operation of social services and, at the same time, the Municipalities have had to identify their specific organizational modalities of interventions (according to the laws of the Region to which they belong) as well as the amount of the funding (according to their own resource allocation policy). Actually it happened that some Regions have worked hard for the successful introduction and proper functioning of foster care, setting up specific guidelines and directives, while others Regions have fallen behind.

The Department of Hygiene, Health and Social Work of the Autonomous Region of Sardinia in July 1999 took action to promote a greater commitment on the Children Rights, by establishing Foster Care Guidelines through its Executive Resolution no. 34/36 of 28 July 1999.

The action taken did implement the guidelines of the 2nd Social Care plan for the 1998– 2000 period, especially those relating to the reconstruction of the institutional network in order to coordinate and rationalize support interventions for minors as well as for families in difficulty. The main aim was to overcome the fragmentation and overlap of the care provided by various institutions because they acted – and still act today – out of the emergency instead out of agreements and projects aimed at ensuring effective interventions to help children and families.

Initially, the Autonomous Region of Sardinia promoted – through laws, decrees and local regulations – the implementation of foster care by creating four working groups, at provincial level, composed of social workers from Municipalities, Health Districts, Family Counselling Services, and Provinces. Those groups have worked out the methodological guidelines on individual projects for children, family of origin and foster family.

Throughout the island were opened Foster Care Centres* that led to family socio-educational projects aimed at minors' protection, using teams made up of social workers and psychologists. These centres have played a role of integration and cooperation with the territorial services, dealing exclusively to foster care. These major initiatives, designed to replace facilities that were expensive and frequently unable to re-create the familiar warmth necessary for the growth of the child, have ceased to exist. Foster care centres were dismantled, and at present only some of them still exist.

The fast evolution of the regulatory framework for social policies; the progressive cuts in public spending on welfare; the failure to define the essential levels of performances provided for by the constitutional reform of 2001, they expose the territories to the risk of managerial drifts, sometimes marked by the persistence of State-centric approaches, sometimes by a "retreat of the state" and by an excessive power delegated to the Third Sector. On the contrary, foster care needs a real subsidiarity where public and Third Sector services as well as civil society's organisations – both formal and informal – are complementary each other respecting their specific competencies.

FOSTERING TYPES: ACTORS AND ROLES

The plurality of modes in which foster care is articulated, corresponds to the need to provide adequate and appropriate responses to the different needs of the child and his/her family; the different types of foster care are in a continuum that range from "lighter forms", which do not involve the removal of the child from his/her family of origin, to "heavier forms" of temporary removal and placement/reception in a foster family. For each foster care social services define a foster care project that aims to protect the interests of the child and, among these, his/her right to maintain and strengthen the ties with the family of origin.

The intra or hetero familiar foster care can be consensual or judicial, in part-time day care or residential care. The health and social services try to privilege consensual way, addressing at juvenile court only when the family do not give its consent and there is a situation prejudicial to the child.

Consensual foster care is ratified by tutelary judge for the maximum duration of 24 months and a possible extension can be ordered by Juvenile Court if the suspension can be detrimental to the child. When there is no consent from the family of origin, and there is a detrimental situation to

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* Foster Care Centers in Sardinia: Province of Cagliari; Municipality of Dolianova; Inter-municipal Center of Carbonia; Municipality of San Gavino Monreale; Province of Nuoro; Municipality of Nuoro; Municipality of Orani; Municipality of Onanì; Family Counselling Service of Nuoro; Family Counselling Service of Orgosolo; Municipality of Bitti; Municipality of Sassari.

the child in accordance with articles 330 et seq. of the Civil Code, foster care becomes judicial and is disposed by the Juvenile Court.

Before proceeding to a hetero-familiar foster the services start a psychosocial investigation on the child's needs, checking the presence and availability of relatives within the fourth degree of kinship, who are suitable and with a significant and positive relationship with the child. The relatives available to an intra-family foster are involved in accompanying and training path, as such type of fostering responds to the child's right to grow up in his/her own family.

If the investigation into the psychosocial situation of the child and of his/her family, detects a sufficient relational competence (to be supported and enhanced), foster care can be part-time, and the child only spends a period of time with the foster family (a few days a week, a short period during the year). It is a form of support designed to avoid, as much as possible, the removal of the child from the family of origin, because the parenting skills of the family of origin can benefit from the foster family support in a clearly defined period. Since the contacts between the family of origin and the foster family are significant, the latter is supported by local services to manage positively this coexistence.

The child may also permanently live with foster parents, and in that case, foster care takes the form of residential care, responding mainly to an affective-relational need of the child to let him experience situations that promote individualization, self-awareness and even belonging to his/her family in view of the reunification.

An open issue and still not provided for by the law, but that cannot be ignored, is that one related to the so called "*sine die*" foster care projects, whose duration is not defined or definable. In some cases, in fact, you cannot predict the return of the child in the family of origin for reasons of non-recoverability or chronicity of the situation of the family of origin. Without modifying the situation of foster care, you can thus protect the rights of children and parents to have a direct and ongoing relationship within the limits of the capabilities and requirements of each.

Wherever possible the territorial services try to activate the solidarity of neighbours for families in need. These are families who live close to the families in need and who are involved in an accompanying and help path shared by the same family. The neighbours' solidarity is formalized by identifying the procedures for daily help for the organization and management of family life.

The foster care is also aimed at very young children for whom it is immediately essential the presence of a stable attachment figure. This fostering has a short duration, which corresponds to the time necessary for professionals to carry out the assessment of parenting skills and for the Judicial Authority to decide on the child's future path (return to the family of origin, foster care, adoption). If the child has very complex needs (disabilities, psychiatric disorders, health problems) his/her reception requires special attention from foster family as well as intense and structured support interventions by social and health services, also in collaboration with the associations.

The foster care is therefore configured as a participatory and relational approach that requires, to be effective, cooperation among at least four subjects: the child, the natural parents, the foster parents, and the services system (social, health, educational, judicial etc.). It is one of the most complex and sophisticated tools within the interventions of protection of children, and precisely because of this complexity, the complementarity among all the actors involved in the process becomes essential, otherwise foster care fails.

The child in foster care can be aged between zero and seventeen, although the foster care project can continue up to his/her twenty-first birthday: due to the complexity of some foster care situations the return to the family of origin could be – as a matter of fact – impossible or inopportune, so the foster care can be extended. In these cases, the social service, having assessed the situation and heard both the child and the foster parents, redefines the intervention's planning. He/she may also be of Italian or foreign nationality, he/she can belong to different cultures and practice different religions and have experienced serious situations in his/her family of origin: neglect, rejection, physical and/or psychological abuse, relational isolation, various kinds of separations, etc. However, even by experiencing foster care, the child is faced with emotionally difficult and painful moments. Therefore, he/she should be supported with a particular focus in all key stages: separation by his/her family of origin, entry into the foster family and the subsequent detachment and return to his/her family of origin.

Sometimes parents* who have experienced difficulties in responding to child's needs, are aware of needing help, sometimes they deny that they need help. To the family of origin is required active engagement in recovering their educational skills, and if the parents live the fostering project as an opportunity, it will prevail the purpose of support rather than that one of the control.

It is important to recognize the pain and fatigue experienced by the family of origin because of the separation from their son/daughter and for having had to rely on others (voluntarily or judicially). Family members of a child in foster care must be informed on aims of the foster care project and have to be involved in all phases of fostering.

Then there is the foster family, a priority resource in any project of foster care, an additional family that does not replace or does not arise as an alternative to the family of origin. This new family has to ensure support, education, instruction and to take care of affective relationships of the child in foster care, ensuring – in accordance with his family of origin and professionals – also the fulfilment of health needs. To become foster parents there are no a priori constraints, nor is it necessary to have specific objective requirements. Citizens willing to accept a minor in foster care can be married or not, with or without children, or single persons.

Foster parents must respect and accept the family of origin maintaining positive relations with it, according to the services' instructions and any Judicial Authority's provisions, in order to favour the return of the child in his/her family of origin.

For this purpose, it becomes crucial the knowledge and assessment of foster parents through a path consisting of a series of meetings (from three to six interviews plus home visit), organized by the fostering team (if any) made up by psychologist and social worker. Foster family's children (if any) are also involved in this path in a way according to their age, just as it does for the cohabitant partner.

The foster family, partner of the services system, shall receive prior information of foster care conditions in order to assess whether or not to give its availability and, later, actively participate in the definition and construction of the project foster care.

Local authorities – recognizing the nature of the work carried out by foster families and with the intent to remove any financial barriers that may hamper the families and people willing and

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* Here the words "parents" and "family" are used in a general sense to indicate parents or people who take care of children and who are significant figures with whom the child has built a special bond (such as grandparents, uncles, older brothers or sisters, people who have taken the main responsibility for child care).

suitable to engage themselves in fostering – must activate specific measures, including economic support. Local authorities, in fact, bear the expenses relating to foster care, ensuring insurance coverage for foster parents and the children (in particular with respect to civil liability or injury), providing to foster parents a monthly sum in accordance with national legislation (Article 5, paragraph 4, of Law no. 184/1983) and the regional legislation.

METHODOLOGIES AND EVERYDAY PRACTICES

Fostering measure cannot be decided without having first listened the child who has attained the age of twelve. It lists the reasons that made it necessary and its likely duration, but also the powers given to foster parents and the mode of the child's relations with his/her family of origin. The measure of foster care indicates also which local social service will have responsibility for the project: this one will have to report to Juvenile Court or tutelary judge every six months on the fostering progress, on the place where child is located and on event of major importance.

Often the judicial authority, when parents are declared forfeited or suspended from parental responsibility, appoints a legal guardian who collaborates with social service in order to coordinate and share methods and interventions. Also, to ensure that juvenile civil proceedings are conducted from the very beginning with the legal assistance of the minor, the Juvenile Court shall appoint a guardian ad litem, preferably in the person of an experienced lawyer in juvenile law, which will represent the minor in the proceedings that can lead to the declaration of a state of adoptability.

The consensual foster care, in fact, is less frequent than the judicial one. The Court judgement is subject to appeal within ten days of its notice and, as a rule, it becomes executive when that period has elapsed. However, under Article 741 of the Code of Civil Procedure, judicial foster care can be immediately effective when the reasons that made it necessary do not allow to wait any longer.

The foster care judgement reports the estimated duration of fostering – commensurate with the difficulties faced by the family of origin – that cannot exceed 24 months, although the Juvenile Court may extend this period, if suspension of foster care can be detrimental to the child. The rationale of such a provision is to be found in the will of the legislator to avoid cases in which the child temporarily in foster care is forgotten, thus remaining in this condition indefinitely. The maximum limit of two years does not put a limit to the number of possible extensions, but provides the obligation for the services and the Court to carry out periodic evaluations on whether to keep the child in a foster family and not in his/her own.

When social workers responsible for child care estimate that should be started a project of foster care, the potentially most suitable family has to be detected among those available ones.

The matching phase ends with a meeting between the child, his/her own family and the foster family. It is not about finding the best family, but the family that is most suitable for that specific situation, because it has resources, educational styles and desires compatible with the needs of that child and his/her own family. A correct matching is essential for a successful foster care and it is a phase too often underestimated by the services, sometimes pressed by the urgency of the removal of the child.

Before the reception, the services implement a path of mutual understanding and gradual acclimatization between the foster family and the child, with the possible exceptions due to emergency placements. Modalities and timing of this pre-fostering path allow every involved subject to get

understanding and awareness of an experience that should be an opportunity, powered by both families, for the child full development.

In fact, even the child's own family can benefit from a range of educational and support interventions aimed at strengthening parenting skills and solve problems that are at the origin of the foster care project.

Taken into account his age, the child is constantly informed, listened to and involved in decisions that affect his/her life and that one of his/her own family. Social workers build an active partnership with the child and his/her family of origin in order to maintain links and preserve a feeling of full belonging. To do this the significant adults create, little by little, a true and meaningful narrative – appropriate to age and ability to understand of the child – of the difficulties experienced by parents and that gave rise to the separation.

It is important that the foster care project contains objectives to be pursued in the short, medium and long term, an indication of the persons involved, educational strategies, tasks of each, the timing and duration of fostering. The procedures for monitoring and of relationship among different services, the frequency of the evaluation meetings with all the subjects and services involved; the frequency of evaluation reports to be sent to the competent judicial authorities; the plan of visits and meetings between the child and his/her own family; modalities and timing of the involvement in the intervention of the family of origin and the conditions for the return of the child in his/her own family; the criteria to manage ordinary and extraordinary situations of everyday life; the mode of relationship between the two families (foster family and family of origin) and the school as well as between them and other significant subjects involved in the child development experiences (i.e. extra-curricular activities); the plan of meetings between foster family and social workers responsible of the project; the amount of the financial contribution to the foster family and the possible contribution to the costs by the child's own family.

The local authority which decided foster care retains ownership of the project even if the foster parents reside in another municipality, informing the social services of the municipality of residence of the foster family and the foster care centre (if any) or the family counselling service, in order to collaborate in supporting the foster family and in the supervision of fostering.

The health and social services carry out an ongoing monitoring of the project of foster care in order to observe the changes and evaluate the conditions that can allow a rapprochement between the child and his/her own family. To assess the possibility of return, social workers perform several times an overall assessment of the child, his/her own family, as well as of the social context and of the risks related to the extension of removal or to the return to home of the child. Social workers share with all the subject involved in fostering, choices, signs that the family of origin can take back the minor and the indicators of the will and of the increased ability to take care of him/her.

The success of an intervention of foster care is detected when, at the end of the experience, the child lives in a more adequate relational environment than the former, in a situation of greater safety and overall well-being and in a more stable environment. Not always the health and social services are able to attain the much desired networking, essential for the implementation of a good foster care project. Even today in some territories there is a strong sense of loneliness felt by the social worker involved in foster care because of the lack, or inadequacy, of a multi-professional team, and everything is left to the good will and professionalism of that professional. The foster families, alike, complain to live a state of neglect respect to the undertaken experience of fostering.

On the contrary, a system of actors, with different roles and expertise, ensures a unitary and professional perspective in the overall management of the project that overtakes the boundaries of different professions and services involved. It is indeed essential a profitable interaction between foster care professionals, families, associations, networks of families and teachers. The involvement of the educational institution attended by the child in foster care, must in fact be planned in the definition of the project as well as in its implementation, in order to enhance the role and the contribution of the school in promoting the social inclusion of the child who lives the experience of foster care.

The foster care ceases, with a provision of the same authority that had ordered it before, when there is no longer the situation of temporary difficulties that had been the cause of fostering or when its continuation could be harmful to the child. If foster care was ordered by the Juvenile Court, it will be the Juvenile Court to order its cessation; if it was decided by the social services, an administrative act is enough for its cessation, without any provision by the tutelary judge.

The cessation of a measure of foster care does not happen only when the child's own family overcomes its temporary difficulties. Sometimes, the parents of the child who had agreed to the measure of foster care, may withdraw their consent and in such cases the child may remain with the foster parents through a judgement of the Juvenile Court that transforms the consensual fostering in judicial fostering. However you cannot exclude the possibility that even foster family can determine the cessation of fostering by means of an explicit renunciation.

The return of the child to his/her own family should not be a traumatic rupture of emotional ties and balance previously created with the foster family, but a transitory phase prepared in advance, accompanied by a gradual intensification of the contacts and followed by supporting activities for the family of origin and the foster family.

To ensure that family reunification can be maintained over time, the foster care's ending needs a phase of mentoring of the child and his family for a period of time sufficient to overcome the so-called "honeymoon" following the return, as well as of activities of support for the foster family.

On the one hand, the family of origin is helped to recognize and value the skills it possesses and to handle any moments of crisis due to reunification, benefiting, if necessary, of additional support measures, such as home education, community centres or forms of emotional closeness. On the other hand, the foster family is helped to rework feelings of loss related to the departure of the child; any children of the foster parents are helped to understand the separation from the minor and to find appropriate ways in which the relationship with him/her can evolve and be maintained over time.

The health and social services have the responsibility in ensuring the care and protection of the child, responsibility which is also expressed in the need for transparency of their action: the project of foster care has to be written with content and language understandable by the family and, if possible, also by the minor and it must contain objectives, times and actions that are really achievable.

This responsibility is concretely translated into a series of constraints and obligations that affect the social worker in charge of the specific case, who has to be accountable to the Judicial Authority, to its own Administration, as well as to the child, to his/her own family and to the foster family.

For all these reasons the foster care needs professionals who can devote continuously to its promotion, training and support, to develop a broader framework of foster care resources.

CONCLUSIONS

Working in the field of foster care requires special attention to relationships' dynamics, to personal experiences and family conditions; it requires the ability to assess complex situations and with high emotional involvement; it requires to take decisions, even tough and radical, often in the short term, without ever losing sight of the primary objective to protect the child.

Policies for families and children need a concerted and co-programmed strategy. In fact, the promotion and organization of foster care in the most virtuous Italian areas shows how local associations and families' networks are an enabling factor to spread the culture of hospitality as well as to realize positive experiences of foster care. For this reason the presence of foster families should be promoted, recognized and, above all, enhanced through direct accounts (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali 2013), as well as it is needed to encourage greater exercise of civil accountability from associations and networks of foster families. The full synergy between "Foster Care Centers" and associations can therefore only be achieved through the realization of contexts of shared programming.

The real challenge today for the services involved in the protection and promotion of family related policies – particularly considering families experiencing fragile situations – is to consider the diversity of the views of all the actors as the condition needed to better understand the situation and thus identify how to transform it positively. This does not mean to replace a "defective" family with a "perfect" one, but to allow the solidarity chain, which goes always through generations and families, to strengthen itself in a logic of mutual accompaniment, mentoring, co-parenting, recognition and mutual collaboration.

At the same time, a steady collaboration is needed between professionals working in services responsible for taking children into care and their families of origin to which has to be recognized the status of subjects and not objects of this taking into care, according to a logic of a transparent relationship, a real partnership, in which the entire subjectivity both of the child and of the parent is fully taken into account within the project that affects them and where the prevailing trend is based on help and not on control.

Foster care is a network intervention that requires an ever greater integration and collaboration between different services and various professionals as well as among State, Third Sector and associations. The co-construction of a language and of a common practice among the different actors involved, still respecting specific functions, professional identities and roles – institution-alized or not – it is therefore an essential factor to develop positive and significant partnerships between Third Sector, associations and local authorities. The comparison, the exchange of experiences, the sharing of reflections between professionals and families is essential to support foster care development.

Furthermore, proper information allows to achieve an effective promotion of foster care as it guides and expands the awareness and knowledge about foster care and the differences between foster care and adoption. Of course, methods of communication and content of the information should be diversified in relation to the persons to whom the information are addressed (professionals, foster families or families of origin).

A project of foster care and a close monitoring of the same, that assess resources and needs of all of foster care protagonists, are a "sine qua non" for the competent authority in order to take into account a project of foster care or an adoption.

In contrast, one of the most critical issues in the field of foster care in Italy is still the scarcity and accessibility of resources – both economic and social and professional – which can favor policies of promotion, development and support of foster care. Consequently local governments tend to favor more expensive policies oriented to residential care which are also opposed to the right of the child to grow up in his/her own family while it is needed to propose innovative and creative solutions able to promote volunteering and mutual aid solidarity between families rather than measures built on money transfers.

Foster care realization presupposes first the existence of a culture of solidarity that transforms individuals into social actors able to have any significant impact on the system according to the ideal type of homo civicus (Cesareo & Vaccarini 2006). Culture of solidarity which, in turn, requires a strong enhancement and activation of all community resources on a territory (Guerrieri & Odorisio 2003) through coordination processes exercised by the public actor (Piga 2012) taking into account the need to realize "complete social policies" (Merler 1984). Culture of solidarity that cannot be reduced to a single event or to the level of personnel change, but does affect the consideration of the other – generalized, à la Mead (1934, 152–159) – to express a public dimension of acting, becoming civic consciousness and meaningful action that creates confidence and active citizenship resources.

Figure 5 – Children and adolescents in family fostering according to length of fostering (percentages) – At 31/12/2012

- less than 1 year
- from 1 to 2 years
- from 2 to 4 years
- ore than 4 years
- data not available
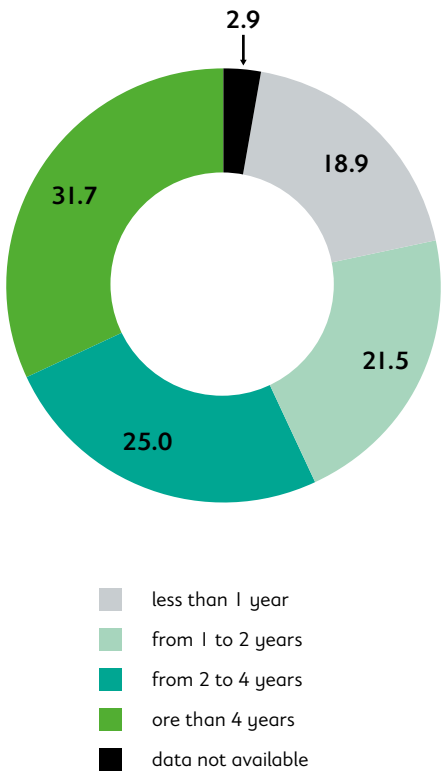
According to this perspective, solidarity is achieved not in episodic, aleatory and often only informal forms of facing the emergency and the residuality, but it is achieved in a more structured way according to a shared project among different social actors able to (re)build social cohesion capable of countering social exclusion and/or social marginalization.

Foster care is thus a resource that must be socially constructed, through promotion and awareness raising activities as well as through a careful interception of needs and help requests that must be collected and welcomed, supported and cared for, to prevent their dispersion because the motivation to foster care is a very fragile rationale, which is often distracted by other objects of interest, if it does not find people availability and immediate attention. Families have then to be guided and trained, constantly supported, especially in the waiting period before the matching. Such investment is essential because foster care means above all to be prepared for the task, to have undertaken a path to become caretakers for foster children: you can say that foster families are not born as a resource but have to become it.

Still today it is rather difficult to get new foster families in Italy. Foster care requires an openness that often conflicts with the increasing

difficulties of "normal" families to meet their care responsibilities. The nuclear family is nearly always absorbed – also for lack of family support policies – in the management of care, education, development and intergenerational solidarity functions for its members. This makes it more difficult to find families not weighed down by their problems, available and able to release the added value that is represented by solidarity. (Naldini 2003; Burlando 2006.)

Italian social services are also facing considerable difficulties to activate new foster care experiences with families who have already been involved in fostering children previously, because of the longer duration of fostering in particularly difficult situations that not allow family reunification. Sine die foster care is rising in Italy but foster families, and especially children, have instead the right to know what to expect and not to live in a "timeless temporariness." (Ministero del Lavoro e delle politiche Sociali 2014.)

For all these reasons we can affirm that actually the main critical issues which require further development of scientific research on foster care in Italy concern: a) organizational arrangements of social services – and more generally of the institutions to which they belong – that provide support to all the actors involved in children's foster care, with particular attention to procedures used to ensure adequate intake of decisions related to the child's temporality (also to prevent the growth of sine die foster care) and b) the modalities through which public and private institutions tried to promote a culture of solidarity, in order to identify more precisely hindering and promoting factors (structural and process) leading to an active community solidarity open to children's foster care.

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Alexandra Strážnická

Foster Care System in Slovakia

INTRODUCTION

Best environment for a healthy and happy development of every child is a stable family with loving parents ensuring emotional bonds for each family member. But not every child is so lucky to be born and be brought up in such proper conditions. There are thousands of children in Slovakia, who are abandoned because their biological parents are either unable or unwilling to take care for them. There are fortunatelly possibilities how to ensure for these children, that they will grow up in optimal environment where their needs, interests and their personality will be respected.

The law in the Slovak Republic recognises several forms of alternative family care, which includes *foster care, alternative personal care, legal guardianship* and *adoption*. With regard to the polarization of the contents and extent of the publication in question I will concentrate exclusively on the introduction of conditions according to which the foster care system is organized in Slovakia.

LEGAL BACKGROUND

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic proclaims, that childcare shall be the right of parents; children shall have the right to parental upbringing and care. The rights of parents may be limited and minor children may be separated from their parents against the parents' will only by a court decision, based on the law (Art. 41 of the Slovak Constitution).

Both parents hold parental rights and obligations. They are established by the child's birth and persist till the child reaches the age of majority. The law distinguishes between the term to "*hold parental rights and obligations*" and to "*exercise parental rights and obligations*". Currently there is the private law codification underway in Slovakia, that contemplates replacing the term "*parental rights and obligations*" with the term "*parental responsibility*" (Kubíčková 2016, 252).

The interventions towards the execution of parental rights and duties are possible only for reasons exactly determined by the law. The state cannot intervene to parental rights and duties, because these are understood as fundamental human rights. The interventions can be directed only towards execution of parental rights and duties. The execution of parental rights and duties of a parent can be temporarily suspended or restricted or the parent can be deprived of the execution of parental rights and duties only by the court (Pavelková 2005, 1). The law provides with the possibility that parental rights and obligations will be exercised by another person as by a biological parent.

The basic general regulation of family matters is the Act No 36/2005 Coll. on the Family (hereinafter reffered as "*the Act on the Family*"). This Act recognises several forms of alternative family care,

which includes foster care, alternative personal care, legal guardianship and adoption. Substitute family care takes precedence over institutional care.

Foster care is one of legal forms of substitute family in cases where parents do not ensure or cannot ensure personal care of a minor child, or a minor child is not free for adoption. In such situations an organ of social and legal protection of children will facilitate a foster care or adoption according to the Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on Social and Legal Protection of Children and Social Custody. Entrusting the child in a foster care is based exclusively on a court decision. The court may decide to entrust the child in foster care of an individual and under certain conditions to a married couple who is/are interested in becoming a foster parent/parents. The court is also the only institution which can cancel foster care.

In decision making process the court shall take into consideration the best interest of the minor child. Prior to giving its judgment on placing a child in foster care, the court is obliged to hear the opinion of the children's social and legal protection authority on whether the person/persons to become a foster parent/parents is/are competent to provide this care. The Act on the Family sets down the right of a child to express his or her opinion in all matters affecting him or her. So if the child to be placed in foster care is of an age to be able to evaluate its situation, the child's opinion on him being placed in foster care must also be heard, and the child's opinion must be considered, taking into account its age and intellectual maturity.

The judge has to consider whether the child's opinion is really his/her own opinion or whether the child follows the opinion of any another person (parent, grandparents etc.). The judge has to contemplate the child's opinion is not always in harmony with his/her best interest. He may appoint an expert (child psychologist) to obtain the real opinion of the child or he may hear the child alone (Pavelková 2005, 13).

FOSTER CARE

The aim of foster care is to return the child into his/her original family if the conditions and possibilities of his/her biological parents are adapted to this step.

A foster family, unlike an adoptive family, is a temporary situation, lasting until the children reach adulthood. Foster parents are not legal representatives of the child they are caring for. The child doesn't take up the surname of its foster parent/s, nor are the names of its biological parents replaced by the names of its foster parents on its birth certificate, as is the practice with adoptions.

Foster parent/s undertake personal care of the minor child and have the right to represent the minor child and manage his or her property only in ordinary matters. In other matters (essential matters) relating for example to undertaking a surgery or concerning the education of the minor child a consensus of biological parents as legal representatives must be reached.

If the foster parent/s believe, that a decision of the legal representative of the minor child in an essential matter is not consistent with the best interest of the minor child, he or she may file for having the consistency of particular decision of the legal representative examined by the court.

Biological parents whose child lives in a foster family still have maintenance obligation to their child and they have the right to meet with their child. The law uses the term "right" not "obligation" to stay in contact with the child. It is accepted, that the parent is not obliged to contact

his or her minor child and the court is not competent to determinate such an obligation to him or her by any decision.

How to become a foster parent?

An individual person interested in becoming a foster parent (hereinafter reffered as "*the applicant*") must meet prescribed prerequisites, such as permanent residence in Slovakia, possession of legal capacity for legal acts in full scope and personal prerequisites, particularly relating to health, personality and morals.

The applicant must file application for entering in the list of foster parents applicants to the local office of labour, social affairs and family in the region of the applicant's permanent address (hereinafter refered as "*the competent local office*") and must pass a preparation course.

The mandatory preparation course lasts at least 26 hours and is organized by the Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic or by accredited subjects. The applicant may choose a subject that will prepare him/her to be a foster parent. After completion of the preparation course a final report is drafted and considered by the subject performing the preparation that serves as a basis for final decision over whether the applicant will make the list of foster care applicants.

The decision over whether a person is eligible to become a foster parent, and thus be entered on the list of applicants is made by the competent local office.

The authorities assess not only the applicants' lifestyle, health, familiar and housing circumstances, but also the motivation of the applicant (in cases of married couples of applicants) to become a foster parent.

The consideration of all above mentioned prerequisites of the applicant/s is performed by the competent local office, that will declare the applicant/s eligible or not to become a foster parent/s and will also decide about entering the applicant/s in the List of Substitute Parental Care Applicants (hereinafter reffered as "*the List*").

As soon as the applicant/s is/are entered into the List, so called "*testing period*" begins. This is a process of mediation including personal contact between the future foster parent and the child to be placed in to the foster care. These meetings are focused to initiate a relationship between them.

FINANCIAL BENEFITS / CHILD ENTRUSTMENT

Persons who care for a dependent child within foster care are eligible for foster care benefits. The benefits help secure the basic prerequisites for the work of foster parents. They serve as remuneration for their work and as compensation for the costs associated with raising and caring for a child.

According to the Act No. 627/2005 Coll. on Substitute Child Care Allowances the foster parent is entitled to get the *foster parent allowance in a sum* of 175,62 EUR per month. It is a basic benefit used to substitute the foster parent's income from employment or business. It may be increased up to 124,91 EUR per month, in cases a foster parent cares for three or more children. There is a special foster parent allowance in a sum of 72,36 EUR per month in cases a child is handicapped or disabled.

Children in foster care are entitled to the *foster child allowance*. It is a benefit used to cover living needs of the child. It includes the simple allowance accorded in a moment when the child is entrusted in a foster family in a sum of 368,19 EUR. There is a special one-off benefit, the allowance at the end of foster care, in a sum of 922,29 EUR, that is used as a support to help young adults get a start in adult life.

COOPERATING AND ACCREDITED SUBJECTS

The Child Centre Slovakia

The Child Centre Slovakia is the oldest civic association for help children in substitute care in Slovakia. It was founded in 1990, but the origins of formation of a group that later founded the Centre, go back to the year 1979. The main objective of this organization is to defend children's rights. Activities of this organization were aimed at children and young people reliant on substitute care, i.e. children and young people who cannot be grown up by their own biological family for different reasons. The Centre performs various kinds of activities in order to pursue its objectives. They may be divided as follows:

- creation of conditions for more effective forms of substitute child care, formation of professional substitute families, promotion of recovery of a non-functional family and promotion of substitute family forms of child care,
- psychosocial and economic help to young people and adult persons, who previously stayed in a substitute care establishment, immediately after termination of ordered institutional care,
- help to children and young people who are already placed in establishments of institutional substitute care and substitute family care by creation of suitable conditions for their all-round development, with focus on successful integration into social life,
- cooperation with related organizations in SR and other countries, in the area of information exchange, law-making and protection of children and young people in substitute care (The Child Centre Slovakia 2016).

Návrat

Návrat is a non-profit organization which advocates and supports the return of children from institutional care into families. In seven regional centres the staff of professionals (social workers, special education teachers, psychologists) deliver complex professional services in two areas: *substitute family care* and *services for at-risk families*. The scope of activities of this organisation is very wide. The representatives of Návrat provide expertise in process of creation and application of laws and other measures related to protection of children's rights. Návrat is an organization authorised by the Slovak Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family to provide the social, legal and psychological training required by the law for people, who want to become a substitute parent. In cooperation with the Pontis Foundation, the staff of Návrat has prepared more than 30 new adoptive or foster pairs or individuals in 2015 in a framework of the project "Let's find every child in Slovakia a family". The aim of the project was to make the future adoptive or foster parents more sensitive to children with specific needs and they support them in their decision to accept such child (Návrat 2016).

Spoločnosť Úsmev ako dar

"*Spoločnosť Úsmev ako dar*" is a non-governmental organization established in 1982 to provide help and support for finding a substitute family for abandoned children. It is another organization authorised by the Slovak Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family to provide the social, legal and psychological training required by the law for people, who want to become a substitute parent. Since 2013 there are three new regional centres for support of substitute parenthood in the towns of Bratislava, Košice and Prievidza. There is a "Club of substitute families" on regional and local level organising various scope of acitivities for the members and supporters (Úsmev 2016).

CONCLUSION

According to the official statistics available on the web side of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family including the data latest from 2014, in 2014 there were 1,061,180 children living in our country, from which 14,051 do not live with their own families. The last decade has seen a shift in the proportion of children brought up in *institutional care* as opposed to *other forms of alternative family care.*

While in 2000 the number of children living in facilities roughly equalled the number of children living in substitute families (around 6,000), in 2014 the statistics show a trend towards alternative families, with 8,743 children placed in one of the forms of alternative family care as opposed to about 5,308 children living in institutional environment.

After the adoption of a new legislation in 2005 improving the placement of children into one of the forms of alternative families, it seemed to be a positive development in reforming the family environment and to prevent the placement of children in institutional care. But it was unfortunately only at the first appearance…

In 2000 there were 418 children placed into foster families, in 2004 and 2005 there was an increase up to 490 children, but since 2006 there is a continuous decline of children brought up in foster families with 202 in 2013 and only 172 in 2014.

According to the statistics available the courts prefer to entrust a child in care to the minor´s relative/relatives, who is/are mostly grandparents or other family relatives.

Foster parents are usually in families with their biological children and they are more flexible in their ideas about the child they would take home. They are also more open to accept an older child, a group of siblings, a child with a handicap or with different colour.

Despite of all the efforts the number of children living in foster families is being declining. This trend is obvious not only with regard to foster families, but also in connection to adoption that is considered to be a preferable form of upbringing an abandoned child.

The stakeholders are aware of a necessity to change this trend and to adopt measures to support substitute forms of family care, such as amendments of legislation, organising regular working meetings with family judges, representatives of authorities for the social and legal protection of children and social curatorship and accredited subjects.

According to the *National Action Plan for Children 2013–2017 in Slovakia*, there is a special part dealing with the support of deinstitutionalisation of substitute care including creation of a new and innovative model of managing support for families and implementation of a training system for foster families.

The number of applicants to become foster parents is still less than the number of children who need it. Hopefully the measures to be adopted are capable to improve the best interests of children and to create proper conditions for children´s upbringing and all-round development in their natural family or in an alternative family environment, if they cannot be brought up by their own parents.

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Act No. 627/2005 Coll. on Substitute Child Care Allowances

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The child protection system in Galicia (Spain). New needs for social and educational support of adolescents and youth with social difficulties

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the investigation is to examine in depth the Child Protection System (CPS) in Galicia through communicative methodology. People who had had a case file rated the socio-educational action of the different facilities through which they had passed. By means of discussion groups, case studies, and life stories, we studied issues that the individuals who had been segregated from the system considered key points to improve the performance of the teams that accompanied them to adulthood. It is only appropriate that the information and analysis should exceed the limits specified in quantitative results and in traditionally assessed attitudes. Thoughts, emotions, and feelings are of special interest. These elements are crucial for the paradigmatic construction of the socio-educational actions that encompass the human spectrum of individual reality.

Our observations are at the disposal of professionals in charge of protective actions who are working in facilities. By means of interviews and discussion groups, team leaders and educators reflect on the participants' considerations. They propose actions to systemically improve the satisfaction of the presented needs. Both perspectives are complementary and essential to deepen our knowledge of the socio-educational accompaniment processes for children and adolescents with social difficulties.

THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM IN GALICIA

The Child Protection System (CPS) in Galicia is made up of a diverse typology of specific facilities with which the administration attempts to meet the needs of children and adolescents with social difficulties. The practical functioning of the system depends on its constant adaptation to the demands of the people targeted by the action. Participation of all the stakeholders is crucial for the functioning of the systemic scaffolding. The involvement of all the parties allows the development of reference elements to support the teams' strategies. Day-to-day performance is the novel aspect but this must be shared and structured of the entire collective. This investigation aims to disseminate the reality of socio-educational accompaniment according to the parties involved in the process.

Rigorous action can only draw on the detailed knowledge of needs and the strategies to address them. Occupational intrusion is a great symptomatic burden due to the historical under-rating of the teams' work. CPS intervention requires complex personal and professional resources that can only be managed by highly specialized staff. It is necessary to claim a proper place for social

Table 1. Research Procedure

				Methods	Prior goals	Timing
Phase 1	Descriptive approach	Context	Economic and Social	Published studies. Official variables of interest for the presentation of the economic and social situation.	Important economic and social factors in the transition to adulthood. Evolution of the training itineraries of the general population	From January to December of 2013
			Specific reality of the CPS.	Review of the state of affairs of the scientific literature.	Considerations of interest of the protection mechanisms regarding the academic evolution of at-risk youth and their emancipation process.	From December 2011 to November 2013.
				Documental analysis of resources.	Training itineraries of CPS participants	From January to March of 2013
				Cases studies.	Socio-educational intervention with participants who had a CPS case file at the time of the research. Aspects to taken into account in the training itinerary. Key considerations in the transition to adulthood. Possible aspects to be improved.	From March to December of 2013
				Discussion group.	Socio-educational intervention and academic itinerary. Proposals for improvement.	December of 2013.
Phase 2	Comprehensive analysis of the CPS participants	Research questions		Life stories.	Rating of the difficulties of the emancipation process. Perception of the socio-educational intervention and improvements.	From July to November of 2013.
Phase 3	Comprehensive analysis of professional figures	Research questions		Discussion group Interviews	Viewpoint of educators who implement the process of socio-educational accompaniment. Perspective of those in charge of different residential facilities.	First trimester of 2015.

education in the educational accompaniment of the participants in the system. Stakeholders' reports reveal a reality in which workers from disciplines without any training in socio-educational action, and therefore, without any specialized qualification, have access to managerial posts in the system and act according to subjective opinions that lack any technical rationale.

Prior investigations help us to understand the reality of the cps resources in Galicia (Spain). Cruz (2009, 605) published an interesting work that analyzes residential centers in depth. She notes the need to reinforce them at all levels and to promote coordination. She recommends the establishment of a theoretical framework adapted to the legislative reference, and also detects the need to improve staff training in the facilities.

Campos, Ochaita, & Espinosa (2011, 67) published a study on the opinions of professionals from the Spanish protection system (Madrid) about satisfying autonomy-related needs through socio-educational intervention. They noted the importance of the normalization principle in order to improve skills for an independent life, concluding that intervention should not be considered as being similar to a family. The needs of the participants during their stay should be met, and they should be provided with skills to carry on an independent life. Affective demands are limited to satisfying those present at the time of the intervention without creating long-term bonds of artificial dependence. The educational team's involvement and the residents' perception of their relationship with the team are essential elements of the intervention. Campos, Ochaita, and Espinosa (2011, 68) consider that some factors hinder the appropriate educator-learner relational dynamics to achieve a normalized climate. The number of children per educator and continuous staff turnover in the centers make this task a difficult issue. Affective support is essential to provide security and improve self-esteem with a view to the child's development and resulting autonomy.

The challenges faced by the protection system are confirmed through the simple observation of the participants' academic reality. We will examine in depth the approach to training itineraries, as well as the factors that stakeholders consider of special importance.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

The investigation was carried out in three phases between the years 2013 and 2015. We wished to obtain information from the different actors involved in the intervention process of the cps. Critical communicative methodology was considered the most adequate to determine the opinion of the collectives in a situation of vulnerability. Our goal is to analyze educational issues. In the Spanish state, the "*Centro Especial de Investigación en Teorías y Prácticas Superadoras de Desigualdades*" (crea; Special Research Center in Theories and Practices to overcome Inequalities) has implemented this model in projects such as the European includ-ed (European Network on Inclusive Education & Disability -Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion from education in Europe 2006–2011). They used this approach to determine the opinions of the population with academic difficulties. We realized the importance of seeking a social science that critically interprets reality by taking into account the opinion of the people targeted by the work.

Gómez and Díez-Palomar (2009, 108) highlight the studied collective members' opportunity to question the existing scientific knowledge on the subject in a climate of dialogue. This process of dialogue with the researcher includes the opinion of people who facilitate our comprehension of reality by enriching traditional scientific knowledge. From being a passive object of study, the individual turns into a transformative element of a reality that affects him, becoming more aware through a process of open dialog. This leads to mutual enrichment within scientific rigor. Social

educational accompaniment is a process of which the participants have knowledge direct. They have experienced the relevant scientific factors in the first person. They interpret their own reality. This investigation falls within a qualitative framework and, more specifically, within the interpretative paradigm. The transformation of a concrete social reality can be a goal of qualitative research.

METHODOLOGY OF THE CPS WITH SEGREGATED PERSONS

The participants were enrolled in the MENTOR program at some point of their itinerary. This resource has the goal of social and occupational inclusion orientated toward support during the transition to adulthood. The sample included youths who were at least 18 years old. Consequently, they had with the legal capacity to decide whether or not to participate in the present investigation. Each life situation advocated the use of a specific technique to obtain the necessary information to address the research questions.

The discussion groups were organized with participants from the CPS who had completed Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE). They had passed at least one post-compulsory course in their academic curriculum. The common experience of successfully passing compulsory studies and remaining within the protection system was of special interest to identify the key aspects that determined their training itinerary.

Case studies were intended to be a sample of differentiated situations of participants who (at the time the information was collected) had an open support file in the CPS. The basic idea was to choose a variety of individuals with regard to their academic evolution and the point of the person's process of transition to an independent life.

The life histories were taken from those of former participants in the Mentor Program who are now emancipated and who had remained for at least 3 years in the CPS. All their case reports are closed and filed. They have a broad view of the CPS socio-educational intervention and they experienced the difficulties that are characteristic of their situation during their emancipation process.

The three technicians sought information about the opinions, particularly of youths with social difficulties, of the different issues that are dealt with in the present investigation. Each technician initially intended to focus on obtaining information about a specific aspect of the problem but this was overcome by the participants' wealth of proposals. The dynamics of the work led to having to deal with issues that were not initially foreseen (Flecha, Vargas & Davila 2004, 27).

The prior goals were enriched by the intensity of an investigation of this nature. The participants were highly involved. They were very interested in disseminating their experiences in order to improve professional accompaniment processes. We respect and guarantee the prevalence of their expressions beyond any researcher intentionality. The participants' opinions validate and give meaning to the intentionality of the work, addressing the reality of youths with a protection case file.

The purpose of a discussion group was to obtain a varied sample of participants who had completed their compulsory studies. They had completed at least a course of high school or middle cycle. We were not considering representativeness, but rather selecting a variety of cases that reflect the plurality of the situations within the protection system. The value of the concrete and the particular are especially important when formulating the different assessments and conclusions.

The study was organized establishing a minimum of 3 participants and a maximum of 8. We invited 8 youths who used to have a CPS case file and who are now autonomous. It was especially difficult to establish the schedule for the discussion group. Work shifts and personal obligations precluded being able to count on all the summoned people. Thanks to participants' willingness and cooperation, 6 of the 8 people who were invited attended. The date initially set had to be changed twice because of unexpected changes in the respective jobs.

The activity was held in an appropriate room with a round table in the center. Various snacks were offered to create a relaxed environment to facilitate the fluidity of the communication. After the initial presentation to the participants, a small snack was served. Subsequently, we explained the purpose of the meeting to the group. At the time of the invitation, we had also provided an individualized and detailed explanation of the purpose of the investigation. Participants signed their informed consent, authorizing the use and dissemination of the material obtained. The moderator performed an introduction, presenting a summary of the current literature on the object of the study. Subsequently, the researcher's role was limited to focusing the debate at those times she considered it appropriate. She used scientific knowledge in order to channel the dialectical dynamics, guiding them towards the target issues.

The discussion group lasted 65.15 minutes, 59.19 used by the participants. The moderator used a total of 5.96 minutes. The participant with the fewest interventions (P2) used a total of 5 and 6.5 minutes. P4 had the greatest number of turns, with a total of 15 interventions that added up to 8.4 minutes. The session was digitally recorded to facilitate subsequent transcription. The researcher wrote down any issue of interest concerning nonverbal language or aspects the recorder did not register.

The case studies were constructed through analysis of the data obtained during the intervention. The socio-educational action was carried out between March and December of 2013. The professional accompaniment under study consisted of intensive action. The analyzed intervention was orientated toward training integration and tasks aimed at the labor insertion of youths with social difficulties. Regarding the academic sphere, we collected information about the evolution of the last months of the 2012-2013 academic year and the first months of 2013-2014. In the latter, information concluded with the academic results of the December assessment. The sample was made up of six participants.

The actions attempted to encompass the participants' global reality. We wished to reproduce the same typology of activities that are habitually performed during socio-educational accompaniment. The only differentiating element is the contribution of the information collected in this research work.

There was total of 215 actions in the case studies, and 46 of them consisted of individualized tutoring, corresponding to individual interviews with the participants. They included actions of planning, reflection, and orientation. Their purpose varied from defining the individual itinerary, goal setting, reflecting on different personal situations, or reflective and guiding conversations. Based on of the principle of integral intervention, multiple aspects of the person's reality were dealt with in these sessions. Thus, depending on each participant's needs, the topics included different areas of educational action. They mainly corresponded to training and job evolution or other aspects of interest for the transition to adult life.

A total of 47 meetings were held to exchange information with the CPS teams. The meetings were focused on reaching a consensus about intervention priorities and coordinating the accompani-

ment process. A total of 30 meetings were held with the educational resources teams. Seventeen meetings were held with the minors' technical team. The sessions with professionals enriched the appraisal of each specific situation. Twenty-nine meetings were held with external resources. Communication with external resources is essential for ecological and social action.

The need for presential support for various administrative tasks led to 14 accompaniments aimed at facilitating the required experiential training in each case. We held a total of 9 interviews with the families or family referents. We assigned 30 educational tasks and 40 individualized follow-ups of activities that were performed by the participants in facilities external to CPS.

The participants in the life histories were emancipated youths who had remained for at least three years in the CPS under an administrative guardianship measure. At the time of history construction, their case reports had been filed for at least 6 months. They had passed through the CPS resources and their own emancipation. The participants in this technique already had a relationship with the researcher due to the previously performed intervention. This facilitated establishing a climate of trust for the interviews. We held three meetings with each youth.

In the first interview, arranged through by telephone, the purpose and nature of the present study was explained. We considered it essential for the participants to have all the necessary information (Bertaux 2005, 36). We used an MP3 recorder and also wrote down all the nonverbal aspects that might help to better understand the verbal content. The second interview was based on a previous script used as a support element. The fluency of the information required us to change the previously established order, and new considerations of the interviewees introduced issues unforeseen by the researchers. The information collected in the two first meetings was outlined to form the basis for the third interview. The participants accordingly ratified or amended the narrative constructed by the researchers, also making new contributions. The recordings reached a total 841 minutes.

PROCEDURE WITH THE PROFESSIONAL FIGURES

We interviewed the persons responsible for CPS facilities a day center, a foster home, and a supervised home to obtain their viewpoints and establish a reflective dialogue between researchers and participants, and determine their interpretations of their experiences (Flecha, Vargas & Davila 2004, 26). Such reflections allow one to address the first-person experiences of the contextual situation.

We carried out two interviews with the professionals. In the first one, we presented an outline of the research process with the youths who had graduated from the system. We explained the main reason for the present investigation and wrote down their initial reactions. In the second meeting, the in-depth interview was conducted and recorded on an MP3 recorder. The first interview (E1) consisted of initial considerations about the issues. The second interview (E2) facilitated a reflection about these issues, which, as mentioned, were based on the previous presentation of the outline of the participants' conclusions.

The educators' opinions were gathered in a discussion group attended by professionals of diverse kinds of residential resources. The information obtained in the prior phases of the research process was contrasted with the contributions of the workers who daily implement the socio-educational accompaniment process.

THE SAMPLE

A total of 15 youths segregated from the system participated in the research. The sample was selected as a function of the intentionality of the information sought with each technique. Sample age ranged between 18 and 22 years.

The professionals' sample was made up of staff with an acknowledged trajectory in the CPS. They had with a minimum of two years' occupational experience in the field. Participants in the discussion group were educators working in different facilities of the protection system and of juvenile reformation (mean age = 35.3 years). The interviews were conducted with three people who perform management functions in different kinds of centers (mean age = 35.3 years). The mean occupational experience of the entire sample was 6.7 years. A professional trajectory in the CPS leads to a greater knowledge of the area.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The supervised youths rated the CPS's socio-educational action according to their personal experiences and the experiences they shared with peers from protection facilities. A shared reality is more relevant in a context in which peers undergo similar and very intense situations. The youths agreed that they did not have sufficient information at the time of entry into the CPS. "*They came to the school and told me I had to go home to pick up my things and that I was going with them… and that's all I knew*", says P4. "*They told me that I was to live in that house and I knew that something would happen, but it was all very upsetting*", says M.

They observed an improvement in the process with younger peers with whom they coincided in the different facilities. They reported that the application of the admittance protocols had been optimized. They believed it was very important for the minors to have as much information as possible. They realized that removing children from the context in which they had been raised is unavoidably stressful, and considered the changes in the past few years, which reduce the "anguish" they had suffered, as positive. "*I know some boys who were admitted in the Center… and they behaved much better with them*", says P3.

Staff turnover, both in the ETM and in the residential resources, is considered negative for the consolidation of the affective relations required to achieve satisfactory educational accompaniment. Educators' and professionals' permanence on the educational and technical teams, respectively, is considered essential for the quality of social educational accompaniment. "*There is a high turnover that is not at all beneficial to the intervention because, with each change, the relationship must start all over again (GDP3, 3′16″)*", commented the professionals in the discussion group.

According to the youths, the stability of educators and technicians on the protection teams is essential to ensure the well-being of the CPS participants. The quantity, intensity, and content of the comments recorded in the information obtained during this research revealed the high staff turnover in the different facilities. The initial contact and involvement demanded by the stakeholders' work unquestionably requires a reduction in staff turnover. The permanence of the team members is essential to enable a high quality follow-up of the personal itineraries.

One aspect that youths underline is the presence of children of very different ages in the different types of residential facilities. The youths consider that this is inappropriate for the younger children because they often adopt as referents older peers with repertories of antisocial behavioral.

Table 2. Protection system participants

Discussion group					
Sex	Age	Evolution of Administrative Situation	Typology of resources during life itinerary	Academic Evolution	Situation at the time of investigation
Female	22	Currently receiving administrative support.	Educational Center for minors and Insertion Support Resource	Passed university degree. Currently studying postgraduate courses	Studying post-graduate courses combined with occupational activity
Female	19	Receiving administrative support. She was mentored.	Insertion Support Resource (ISR)	Studied 1st grade of high school. Incomplete	Actively employed
Male	18	Technical support after guardianship.	Family home	Studying middle cycle	Dedicated exclusively to academic activity
Female	22	Supervised and subsequently received technical support.	Family home	Obtained university degree. Studying postgraduate courses	Combines occupational activity with postgraduate studies
Female	21	Under guardianship, subsequently received technical support.	Family home and Insertion Support Resource (ISR)	Completed middle cycle	Occupational activity
Female	19	Receiving administrative support. She was mentored.	Educational Center for Minors (ECM) and foster family	Studying university degree	Student

Case Studies				
Sex	Age	CPS Itinerary	Academic evolution	Situation in the process of transition to adult life.
Male	18	Day Center Studying compulsory	Professional Qualification Program modules	Academic activity. Pending starting active search for employment.
Female	18	Program of Family Integration (PFI), Foster care, Educational Center for Minors (ECM) and Insertion Support Resource	Completed CSE	Emancipated and employed.
Female	18	Educational Center for Minors (ECM)	Passed compulsory PQP modules. Studying voluntary modules.	Contemplating different options with a view to emancipation. Combining academic activity with job-hunting
Female	18	Educational Center for Minors (ECM)	Studying CSE.	Combining academic and occupational activity. Starting emancipation process
Female	18	Educational Center for Minors (ECM) and foster family	Studying university degree	Focused on academic activity. Living in University residence

LIFE STORIES				
Male	22	Foster family, Educational Center for Minors (ECM), Insertion Support Resource and Assisted Insertion Support Resource	Completed middle cycle	Has been emancipated for 26 months. Actively employed. Without family support
Female	22	Educational Center for Minors (ECM), Family home, and Insertion Support Resource	Completed CSE	Emancipated for 17 months. Actively employed. Currently studying a course in Training Action for the Unemployed (AFD) and job-hunting
Female	22	Family home	Completed university degree and studying postgraduate courses	Emancipated for 7 months. Combines work with postgraduate studies
Male	21	Foster family	Primary studies	Emancipated for 14 months. Actively employed

Table 3. Research participants

Post	Training	Age	Code	CPS occupational experience (years)
Judicial Educator	Social Education	38	GDp1	14
Residential Resource Educator	Political Sciences	36	GDp2	6
Residential Resource Educator	Social Education	27	GDp3	2
Day Center Educator	Social Education	34	GDp4	7
Residential Resource Educator	Social Education	26	GDp5	3
Interviews				
Director of supervised housing	Social Education	35	Ep6	4
Director of Day Center	Social Education	34	Ep7	10
Director of family home	Social Education	37	Ep8	7

On another hand, the older participants complain of their reduced work potential with a view to emancipation because of residential limitations derived from caring for the younger children.

The phenomena of assistentialism and overprotection negatively affect the evolution of the itineraries in the system. The professionals state: "*It seems that we are going backwards in the presence of assistentialistic trends* (GDp1, 39′15′′)." They consider that the presence of different and even contradictory models has a negative impact on social insertion and empowerment. They argue: "*The work conditions and the models are to the detriment of participation* (GDp4, 30′00′′)." Overprotection conditions the emancipation process. The educators indicate the presence of a bubble effect as a consequence of the presence of these models. They state, "*Sometimes youths are like in a cloud, as if they were in a bubble in some centers, and that makes it difficult to bring them back to reality* (E2p6, 5′45′′)."

The etiology of the assistentialistic perspective is determined by the educational staff's lack of expertise. The professionals think that the level of qualification has improved remarkably in recent years but they believe that the permanence of staff without formal training is very negative. "*It hurts a lot see some of the things that are done in centers by people who are not educators and who are acting out of charity (GDP2, 36'41'')*", according to the discussion group of professionals. The youths confirmed the above, stating that "*they sometimes used to do things that, if they did them nowadays, would be considered terrible*" (N).

The protected youths appraised the last years of their itineraries more positively. They acknowledged the improvement of the educational teams' praxis. Although evolution is undeniable, many aspects that should have been overcome were mentioned. Techno-centric actions still depend on the supposed supremacy of professional criteria to the detriment of the adolescents' capacity to make the right decisions for their needs.

Participation in the itineraries seems to be transcended in the different intervention protocols but in practice, it is appraised differently by the youths. "*The children must be heard and decide about the things that affect them*," stated P4. Very disparate appraisals were observed in reference to some facilities. When referring to guaranteeing residents' decision-making in issues of their interest, global socio-educational action should be considered. We agree with the proposal of Manota & Melendro (2013, 57) and support the adolescent's real protagonism. Resistance, and currently even the resurgence of assistential models, leads us to strongly defend viewpoints that are committed to the minors' appraisals and decisions in aspects that are in their own interest. Sharing the process facilitates our comprehension of the educational processes (Borile 2011, 10). It is appropriate to unify common lines of action (Cruz 2009, 622) that meet individual needs, behaving consistently during the entire vital itinerary in the system.

Participants' academic failure is considered as one of the big problems of the protection system, both by residents and professionals. In the documental review of the first phase of the present investigation, we found 83% of failure indicators in compulsory studies. The segregated CPS youths blame this on factors such as the teams' commitment to short-term itineraries due to the need to start working. The youths consider it to be a lack of trust in their abilities. In this vein, P6 said: "*they told me not to study high school, that I would not be capable; they told me to study a middle cycle and start working.*" The professionals indicate the lack of regularized support to pursue post compulsory studies as the main factor impacting on itineraries that guarantee faster insertion in the work market.

Both collectives refer to the lack of coordination between school and protection resources as well as to the presence of myths that influence teachers' negative attitudes. "*There are huge communication barriers between the systems (GDP3, 51'12'')*", claim the educators. "*It is very frustrating to have to conceal from your teachers the fact that you're living in a center for minors for fear of their reactions*", points out X, a young woman with a history of academic success. The fear of being underestimated or labeled is related to the influence of the professionals' attitudes (Manota & Melendro 2016, 71).

Another notable factor is the absence of referents with a positive impact on school adjustment. "*In my case, starting to practice sports was decisive*", points out M. Promotion of peer contacts with a positive view of the academic sphere facilitates involvement in the training trajectory (Montserrat, Casas, Malo & Beltran 2011, 237). Performing activities outside of the protection system is highlighted as a good practice by the educators, who stated: "*The word is normalization (GDP4, 59'10'')*". Due to organizational and resource issues, they claim that the managing bodies of the

centers prefer the residents to perform internal activities, to the detriment of other activities that promote community integration. "*The centers frequently make them carry out internal activities that limit other activities* (GDP1.57′37′′)."

The academic exclusion data presented are not supported by official quantification. Previous investigations point to the same tendency in different territories (Del Valle, López, Montserrat & Bravo 2008, 116). The two systemic realities are apparently related. The curricular claims of the school setting needs to be linked with minors' more practical needs. The involvement of personal referents facilitates greater school adjustment (Suárez et al. 2011, 60).

The presence of protection system professionals in the schools is a good strategy to accompany the minors' curricular itinerary, based on the unquestionable need to consider the social aspects of the academic sphere within the framework of an ecological approach. We need to intensify the collaboration among the workers of the two systems (Cid & Fernández-Simo 2014, 134). The necessary involvement of all the actors of the educational reality and we recommend integral interventions that take into account all the aspects inherent to the minors. Academic claims are often neither understood nor shared in the youths' natural context. In this vein, E2P6 suggests that "*The minors are mainly practical due to their experience and they don't understand the proposal of theories that they do not consider useful either in the present or in the future.*" The tensions between the two realities have a negative effect on the students' training evolution.

Academic evolution is crucial for the process of labor insertion and as a result, for emancipation. The youths positively value the work of the specialized facility for transition from the CPS to adult life, the MENTOR Program. They recommend reducing the age of entry into support centers for dependents of this program. "*Entry into the Mentor Program helps you to learn what life is really like and to be better prepared,*" stated P, an emancipated young woman. The educators observed the delay in the incorporation into the program. "*They enter the program when they are planning to start job hunting* (GDP1, 70′25′′)." In our case studies, this had also occurred.

The professionals also note that, "*In all cases, firstly, we work on skills for the job market, but especially in cases of academic failure* (GDP1, 71′07′′)." They refer to the non-application of protocols by the public employment service when prioritizing access to training activities for the unemployed. They claim that "*there should be positive discrimination* (GDP1, 70′25′′)."

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The common purpose of the protected individuals and the technicians who accompanied them on their itineraries is to achieve social and occupational inclusion and the individuals' transformation into active and aware citizens who will help to create a more just society. The compensatory action of the CPS should be translated in terms of social equity. The youths do not think that the intervention offset the inequalities derived from the nature of their contextual origin, although they admit that the situation of vulnerability was attended to.

The participants confirm the high turnover of professionals and educational teams, which hinders the relational dynamics between educators and children. This situation leads to negative repercussions for a stable space of personal development for the child. The turnover of the educational teams should be reduced. The administration should promote the stability of the professionals as an indicator of reference of the quality of the service. The mechanisms of concession and adjudication of the management resources should give priority to this factor as a very relevant element.

The difficulty of working with CPS youths requires high qualification of the involved professionals. We recommend the establishment of prior specific basic training before initiating the professional exercise in the sector, which would complement the curricular contents provided by the access degrees. Specialization training should be a requirement for professional exercise in this sphere. The involvement of competent administration in the field of minors' protection should be increased by setting a calendar of training activities to promote the renewal and specialization of the professionals of the sector.

The participants ratify the presence of diverse contradictory educational models. We have observed different intervention frameworks with various perspectives but with a shared purpose and common legislative reference. We recommend the establishment of common methodological lines within the majority socio-educational perspectives present in the current scientific literature. This does not refer to the establishment of a common framework, which is hardly achievable due to the wealth of current models. Our intention is to establish appropriate common references from a technical viewpoint. Currently, the protocols of the system focus on the form of the action but not on the methodological background.

Youths who are segregated from the system think that they have few possibilities of participating in the definition of their personal itinerary. We propose the establishment of a biyearly mandatory meeting to review the present situation and to set up new goals for the individualized educational project. The participant, the educational team, and the technical team must be present at this meeting.

The youths denounce their invisibility as a collective within the academic sphere. We recommend the creation of registers in order to elaborate the statistics of the academic evolution of CPS participants. Knowledge of the training situation is essential to determine whether academic integration is achieved, as well as to organize compensatory mechanisms to correct possible deficits. In the present investigation, the scarce coordination between school setting and protection resources was revealed. We recommend the establishment of two reference figures to act between the two systems (school and CPS) and to enhance the optimization of actions orientated towards the school inclusion of youths with protection case files.

The presence of myths in part of the teaching staff, as well as negative attitudes toward the academic evolution of students with protection case files, makes it necessary to perform awareness-raising and training activities. Within the training offer for teachers, we recommend the introduction of activities aimed at increasing the teaching staff's knowledge of the reality of CPS participants.

The youths in the present work confirm the consequences the so-called bubble action. They consider it essential to increase the realism of the interventions and to facilitate the approach to the working world among minors aged 16 to 18 years. They claim that there is an intense approach in the months prior to reaching majority. Leaving the specific emancipation facilities should be planned. In the legal framework, despite the recent legislative reform, no specific obligations are specified to guarantee effective support in the process of transition to adulthood. The only normative advance is a reference to the appropriateness of continuing to support the processes of social insertion after reaching majority (18 years). Social-educational accompaniment is defined by its procedural nature. It should regulate the subsequent professional support after coming of age. Social inclusion implies the conclusion of the processes of labor integration and before that, of the training itineraries. The regulation of the practical right to accompaniment and institutional protection to study post compulsory courses is a crucial need that the system should meet as soon as possible.

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Melike Tekindal & Seda Attepe Özden

Child Protection System in Turkey

DEFINITION OF CHILD

It will be appropriate to begin this child-focused study with the definition of child. It is possible to encounter various definitions in the literature on children where the term child is lexically defined as human baby. Yörükoğlu (2000, 3) defines child as a *human baby* and a citizen who is still developing and not yet fully mature and who cannot be considered as an adult.

In the developmental psychology, childhood is defined as the period between infancy and adolescence, while it refers to the period until the age of majority in the law. There is no common definition of child in the Turkish law; however, it is known that there are different laws that include various provisions regarding the children. For example, the Turkish Labor Law does not include any definition of child, but has various provisions with regard to children. In Article 87 of the Turkish Labor Law, the age of eighteen is considered as the upper limit of childhood. Similarly, the Turkish Criminal Procedure Code states that no children under the age of twelve should be held criminally responsible. Article 3 (1) (a) of the Child Protection Law No. 5395 of March 3rd, 2015 defines juvenile as "any individual that has not yet completed age eighteen, regardless of whether they have reached full legal age earlier".

In the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the word "child" is used as a term covering all individuals under the age of eighteen years unless majority is attained earlier under the local laws applicable to the child (UNICEF 2016). It should be noted that no definition of child had been made in the conventions regarding the rights of the children before the CRC (for example the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924). This can be attributed to the fact that a child is defined differently by each country based on their legal norms.

It is difficult to encounter a definition of child in the literature upon which there is an agreement. However, the existing definitions have some points in common. Some of these common features are as follows: A child is a developing person; is usually under the age of eighteen; is dependent on adults and is an innocent human being who needs protection. Above all, children are recognized as human beings that constitute the first stage of human life. It should be the priority of each society to raise children in a physically, socially, mentally, economically and morally healthy environment and to protect them from neglect and abuse (Beter 2010).

It is evident that the meaning of being a child and the value attached to children changes from one society and culture to another. Arguing that childhood is a concept changing depending on the social structures, cultures, beliefs and economic systems of the societies, İnan (1968, 3) also confirms the above mentioned hypothesis. For example, the value attached to children in the societies based on agriculture and livestock breeding will be different from that in the industrialized societies. In the agricultural societies, families used to be encouraged to have a child in

order the increase the number of people (labor force) working on farmlands. In a similar way, having a child or protecting children had a different meaning in the regions where the gains in the society were based on the physical power of the families. There are still many regions in the world where people use children as an economic power (Beter 2010).

In today's world, it is accepted by almost everybody that children are our future and healthy generations will create health societies. Therefore, the whole world now accepts that the rights of the children should be protected in order to raise healthy generations and to ensure that societies will have physically, mentally, socially and morally healthy individuals in the future. It would not be wrong to say that such an understanding affects the whole process of policies, plans and programs with regard to children from the development phase to the implementation and evaluation. Akyüz (2000, 1) suggests that providing children with a happy and healthy childhood is a prerequisite for the nations to maintain a financially and emotionally happy and peaceful life. Moreover, İnan (2005, 59) underlines that the future of societies depends on protection of children in terms of physical, mental, moral and intellectual development (Beter 2010).

It is an undeniable fact that children are the future of a society. However, children must also be treated as individuals and it must be expressed that they have inherent rights arising from being an individual. In other words, as recognized by the natural law, human rights in general and children's rights in particular are not the rights bestowed upon people, but those that people are inherently entitled to because of being a human being.

THE CONCEPT OF "A CHILD IN NEED OF PROTECTION"
(neglected, abused, victim of crime, pushed into crime, working on the streets)

In line with the conceptualization of abandoned or poor children in the past, the concept of "*a child in need of protection*" emerged due to the fact that abandoned or poor children also need protection. Koşar defines the children in need of protection as those for which the conditions required for their healthy development in every aspect are failed to be met (Koşar 1992, 43; as cited in Salim 2011).

Yörükoğlu describes the children in of protection as abandoned children and defines them as those deprived of their natural right to live with their birth parents and for whom people have feel pity, but do nothing to look after them (Yörükoğlu 2000, 191).

In the Law No. 2828 on Social Services and Child Protection Agency, a child in need of protection is defined as follows:

> *…the children whose physical, mental and moral development or personal safety is in danger; 1. who are without mother or father, 2. whose either mother or father or both are unknown, 3. who have been deserted by mother, father or both, 4. who have been neglected by mother or father and left vulnerable to vicious practices such as prostitution, begging, alcohol or drugs and becoming adrift (Law no: 2828, Article 3/b).*

Child Protection Law No. 5395 addresses the children in need of protection from two different aspects. The law separates children into two, children in need of protection and children pushed into crime.

Children in need of protection represent the children whose physical, mental, moral, social or emotional development and personal safety is in danger, who are neglected or abused, or who are victims of crime. On the other hand, a children pushed into crime means any juvenile about whom an investigation or prosecution is carried out on the allegation that he/she has committed an act which is defined as a crime in the Laws, or any juvenile about whom a security measure has been decided due to an act he/she has committed (Law No: 5395, Article 3).

According to Akyüz, the definition of a child in need of protection is very comprehensive. Every child is legally in need of protection from the moment he/she was born as a healthy and full-term baby until the age of majority without regard to whether they are accompanied or abandoned, wealthy or poor, criminal or guilt free or with disabilities or not (Akyüz 1987, 11).

The phases that the current policies on such children have gone through go back to the convention of the rights of the child.

The concept of child protection can be described as ensuring the safety of children in all aspects, including physical, social, emotional, economic, cultural, moral and political on a legal basis (Beter 2010, 10).

THE CONCEPT OF NEGLECT AND ABUSE

Throughout the centuries, threats and dangers children face have been believed to emanate from outside the family. However, it became evident in the 20th century that children are also vulnerable to abuse and neglect within their families. Therefore, it was recognized after the 1940s that children must also be protected within the family. With the effect of this understanding and consciousness about child and childhood, the children subject to neglect and abuse within their families became one of the concerns of the researchers. It can be seen that the first studies in the field were conducted in the USA (Beter 2010).

Kempe et al. were the first to define the characteristics of abused children and the signs of child abuse in 1962 (Starr 1988; as cited in Ammerman & Hersen 1990, 6–7). They mostly dwelled on the physical indicators of abuse and defined injuries, bruises, swelling or suspicious accidents etc. as the signs of child abuse. However, in today's world, child abuse does not only appear as a phenomenon that involves physical injuries. Other types of abuse such as emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect were also included in the scope of child abuse.

The concepts of neglect and abuse can be classified in different ways. Without doubt, these concepts do not only emerge as a result of the negative behaviors and attitudes of the adults towards the children. They can also involve the type of abuse coming from the peers or other older children. Known as "peer abuse" in the literature, this type of abuse is thought to make a lasting impression on the children. Therefore, we believe that child abuse can be classified into two: "*child abuse by adults*" and "*child abuse by children*".

Starr (1988, 119–125) indicates that four elements must be reviewed in defining child abuse: (1) the intentionality of the act, (2) the impact of the act on the child, (3) value judgements about the fact and (4) the cultural and societal standards upon which the act is evaluated. Starr argues that a universal definition can be made if these four elements are solved. However, given the nature of the child abuse and neglect and the diversity of the triggering factors, it is seen that these four elements remain incapable.

The scientific researches showed that there were also some other problems in the families in which neglect and abuse cases occurred. In other words, there are many factors that can be considered as the reasons of child abuse. Cameron and Freymond (2006, 6) list these elements as follows: Parental history of neglect and abuse, Parental functioning, Emotional and physical illness, Substance abuse, Lack of knowledge, Social isolation, Domestic violence, Lack of child development opportunities, Economic distress, Community disintegration.

So far, we have tried to identify the place of child in the system in Turkey by addressing the perspective and approaches to children and the concepts of children in need of protection, child abuse and neglect. Now we move to address the child protection policies and services in Turkey.

HISTORY OF CHILD PROTECTION IN TURKEY

The services which were one provided on the basis of charity and religious beliefs began to be provided based on an understanding of individual rights during the period of the Republic of Turkey.

Another point that received considerable attention during the period of the Republic of Turkey is the legal dimension of the issue. After the establishment of the Republic (1923), and especially starting from the 1940s, the legislation with regard to child protection was introduced. It can be seen that the legislation combined not only the services provided to the children in need of protection, but also the social services offered to all individuals in need under a single act in the later years (Beter 2010).

Following the "Public Health Law No. 1593" (Umumi Hıfzıssıhha Kanunu) enacted in 1930, the Law No. 5387 that came into force in 1949 was re-enacted as the "Law No. 6972 on Children in Need of Protection" in 1957. With this new law, local authorities were also empowered to provide care to the abandoned children in need of protection, and the protection units in the governments were entrusted with tasks and responsibilities related to social services in an effort to overcome the inadequacies in the Law No. 5387. During the period of the Republic, the first comprehensive legal arrangement was the "Law No. 5387 on Children in Need of Protection" which was enacted on May 23rd, 1949. This law was enacted with an aim to protect "children whose physical, mental and moral development is in danger, who are without mother or father and about whom a protection order has been decided as per the provisions of Turkish Civil Code". The most important aspect of this law is to include objectives regarding the provision of child-related services in a corporate integrity for the first time.

The most important developments in the social field gained momentum in Turkey in the 1960s. In the decade between 1960 and 1970 which is known to be the development period of a social state, important developments in the field of social security were witnessed and important institutions such as unemployment insurance, full employment and nursing insurance were implemented. During this period, welfare level of all societies increased to a considerable extent together with the quality of people's lives across the world. Turkey was also affected from these developments. The most important result of this effect was the adoption of the 1961 Constitution. In the 1961 Constitution, the provisions with regard to children and families were incorporated in Article 43 which reads as follows: "children, young people and women shall be accorded special protection…". In the 1960s, some progress was achieved which were of particular concern to the Child Protection Agency (CPA) and would shape the organizational and legal structure for the protection of children in the following years. Among these developments, establishment of the "Social Services Institute" in 1959 and the "Social Services Academy" in 1961 was the most important one.

In 1963, the General Directorate of Social Services was established by the Law No. 225 under the central organization of the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance. The nature of activities carried out by the directorate and its achievements throughout the 20 years of operation laid the basis for today's Social Services and Child Protection Agency which was established in 1983. Thus, the concept of "social working" began to be addressed professionally for the first time in Turkey and conceived of as an occupation. On the other hand, it was realized that the laws enacted in 1949 and 1957 did not have a holistic approach to the issue of children in need of protection and a new "Law No. 2253 on Juvenile Courts" was passed in 1979. The regulation came into force only in 1982 and the courts were established officially only in two provinces by the end of 1987 (ismetgalip.com, 2016).

Particularly the adoption of the Law No. 2828 on Social Services and Child Protection Agency on May 27th, 1983 shows that the legal basis for the services provided to the children in need of protection in Turkey was established as a whole. The law had a holistic approach when compared with the period it was enacted. The Law No. 2828 on Social Services and Child Protection Agency shows that the irregularities in the social services in Turkey were corrected, a legal definition of social services was made and the services provided to the children in need of protection were gathered under a single roof (Beter 2010).

The General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection Agency was established by law and organized in 81 provinces and certain districts, holding its headquarters in Ankara. The Directorate has become the most effective and widely organized institution which implements the Social Services for children, young people, elders, people with disabilities and families across the whole country. With the advantage of centralized management, service quality and standards could be increased to a certain level. As mentioned previously, what is meant by a "child protection system" is the legal and organizational structure that organizes the services which aim to sustain the well-being of children and protect them from abuse and neglect. In Turkey, the child protection system was formed by the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) (ismetgalip.com, 2016).

Articles 41, 58, 60, 61, 65 of the 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey include provisions regarding the protection of family in general and children in particular. In the 1982 Constitution, the concept of child is addressed within the family and it is stated that both children and families are under the state's protection (Kontaş 1992). There is a binding provision in Article 2 of the Constitution stating that the Republic of Turkey is a social state and this provision places upon the shoulders of the state the responsibility of taking necessary measures and providing necessary services in order to meet the needs of the citizen, to minimize poverty and inequalities, to ensure that the citizens live with human dignity and to reduce their concerns about the future. Article 41 of the Constitution titled "Protection of the Family" states "The family is the foundation of the Turkish society… The state takes the necessary measures and establishes the necessary organization to ensure the peace and welfare of the family, especially the protection of the mother and children…". Article 61 that includes the provisions for social security states: "The state takes all kinds of measures for social resettlement of children in need of protection. To achieve these aims the state establishes the necessary organizations or facilities, or arrange for their establishment by others."

Similarly, Article 185 of the new Turkish Civil Code No. 4722 which was enacted in 2001 states "Spouses are responsible for working together for the happiness of the marriage union and paying attention to the care, education and surveillance of the children". According to Article 347 which includes provisions regarding the child raising, "if the interest and physical and mental

development of a child is in danger and the child has been left morally, the judge may decide on the placement of the child in a family or an institution" (Yolcuoğlu 2009b).

With the Decree Law No. 633 Organization and Functions of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies of June 3rd, 2011, the task of developing child protection policies was transferred from the Social Services and Children Protection Agency to the Ministry's General Directorate of Child Services. In the following sections, the services provided within the scope of the child protection system in Turkey will be addressed in detail.

CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM IN TURKEY AND THE SERVICES PROVIDED

In Turkey, the child protection system is mostly provided by the government. The services offered by the government are carried out by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. The services carried out by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies can be divided into two categories: family care services and institutional care services.

Family care

Family care reflects an understanding of child protection together with the family members (Salim 2011, 87). Today, modern child protection systems primarily aim to promote the care of children within their families (Beter 2009, 82).

Without doubt, family is the best environment for raising a child. However, in some cases, it is not possible for a child to be raised within his/her family due to the living conditions and live events. Due to some psychological, social and financial reasons, some families become incapable of resolving their problems and caring their children (Yolcuoğlu 2009).

"According to the results of a study conducted with 13,742 children living in the child protection institutions in Turkey in 2005, the main reason for institutional placement is financial and social deprivation (69.5%), followed by other reasons such as abandonment of children by their parents (33.4%), conviction of the mother or father (21.2%), sexual abuse or maltreatment in or outside the family (7.7%), death of the mother or father (5.7%), physical or emotional abuse by the family (1.5%), rejection by the step mother or father, natural disasters and terror (6.6%) (Yazıcı 2012, 515).

As can be seen, financial and social deprivation is the main reason for institutional placements of children in Turkey. Therefore, social and financial supports constitute an important part of the children protection system in Turkey.

Social and Financial Support

In Turkey, children constitute a part of the population mostly affected by the problem of poverty. For example, it is known that the families of a great majority of the children living or working on the streets have low socio-economic status (Salim 2011, 89).

"Social assistance covers any assistance in cash and kind provided within the bounds of existing resources to the persons and families that are not able to meet their basic needs due to poverty and have difficulty in sustaining their lives even at the lowest level" (Yolcuoğlu 2009, 72). By means of social assistance, individuals are provided with assistance for a given period with an aim to help them achieve minimum standards of life (Yolcuoğlu 2009, 72).

As per the Regulation on Social and Financial Support Services of March 3rd, 2015 issued by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, the financial assistance amounts to the salary of the highest-paid public officer (additional indicators included). The same regulation indicates, "among those determined to be in need of periodic financial assistance, monthly payments shall be made in remuneration for board, lodging, education, clothing, allowance and shuttle services based on the following amounts of economic support:

a) 50% of the financial assistance for the preschool children and dropouts,

b) 75% of the financial assistance for the children from the 1st to 8th grade,

c) 80% of the financial assistance for the children from the 9th to 12th grade,

d) 90% of the financial assistance for those continuing higher education for whom care measure has been extended,

e) 40% of the financial assistance for those who were previously under a care measure order, but left the social service institution or the foster family as they have reached the age limit."

The purpose of the social assistance provided to the families is to ensure that children remain within their families as much as possible. Social assistance can be divided into two groups:

Periodic Social Assistance: It includes assistance that will be provided to the people in need of assistance within the possibilities of the Ministry's budget for a period of at least 1 year in order to solve the problems they have. The families are monitored periodically and the assistance continues to be provided for 2-year periods, unless their problems have been solved.

Temporary Social Assistance: It includes assistance to be provided once a year, or where necessary, twice a year at most, in orders to solve a social or economic problem (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015).

The Amount of Social and Economic Support change due to type of educational status and it changes 315, 72 TRY to 710,37 TRY*

Although the social supports aim to ensure that children remain within their families, institutional placement of children can be necessary in some cases. Following is some information about institutional care.

Institutional Care

Beter (2009, 86) defines institutional care as "providing the individuals with an environment within an institution or organization instead of the family in which they live together with their blood kins or non-kin people and are given care by people responsible for caretaking as a profession".

In Turkey, different groups of people such as children in need of protection, people with disabilities and the aged are provided with institutional care services. Throughout the history, the children have been placed under institutional care due to different reasons such as inability of the families to care their children for some reasons, abandonment by their parents, being forced to work on the streets or being pushed into crime (Beter 2009). Today, institutional care system is evaluated

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* Turkish Liras

under two groups. The first group includes barrack-type institutions. In these institutions, a large number of children stay together. The second group includes those called modern institutions where smaller number of children stays together (Beter 2010).

There are many studies on the negative effects of institutional care on the physical and mental development of children. The study by Şimşek et al. (2008) reported that the prevalence of problem behaviors ranged between 18.3% and 47% among the children in institutional care versus between 9% and 11% among those raised by their own families.

In Turkey "priority was given to providing institutional care services to the children in need of protection and care in the past years; however, the primary aim now is to return the children under institutional care to their families or provide them with foster care and adoption services and, if it not possible, to place them in child houses or children care houses (sevgi evi). The transition process from institutional care to family-based services and from dormitory type facilities to the home care model such as children care houses (sevgi evleri) is still ongoing." (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015).

The current child protection services provided in Turkey under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies will be explained briefly below (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015).

Nurseries

Nurseries are boarding social service organizations responsible for ensuring physical, educational, psycho-social development of the children between the ages of 0 and 12 years who are in need of protection and for helping them gain a healthy personality and good habits. Where necessary, the girls who turned 12 and are in need of protection can be looked after at nurseries. 390 children in total are offered service at 7 nurseries as of the end of 2015.

Orphanages

Orphanages are boarding social service organizations responsible for the protecting and looking after the children between the ages of 13 and 18 who are in need of protection and educating them in a way that they can be able to find a job and become socially beneficial individuals. 401 children in total are offered service at 10 orphanages as of the end of 2015. In addition, 319 children are offered service at 6 organizations providing service for children between the ages of 0 and 18 as nurseries and orphanages for girls.

In the last decade, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies have been trying to reduce the number of children living in the nurseries and orphanages. For this purpose, the Ministry decided to change the structure of the facilities. Efforts have been made such as using single beds instead of bunk beds, reducing the number of children in the rooms from 10–15 to 2–4 and converting the rooms into a cozy environment. Moreover, "the number of children officially living in these facilities was reduced to a considerable extent within the scope of the "Family Reunification Programme" (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015).

With the decision of the Ministry to switch from mass care to smaller scale care facilities, new models in the child protection system emerged. Following is some information about these new models.

Child Care Houses (Sevgi Evleri)

Child care houses are boarding social service organizations where 12 children (aged 0 to 18 years) at most stay in rooms for three persons and were constructed taking into account the development needs of the children proper for their age within a site comprised of private villa-type houses giving service in a family atmosphere. 4,590 children in total are offered service at 86 child care house sites (593 villa-type houses) as of the end of 2015 (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015).

Houses for Children

It is a service model where 5–8 children at the age group of 0–18 stay together in a home environment at regions with appropriate social, physical and cultural structures for child raising, preferably in city centers, at flats or private houses close to schools and hospitals. 5,366 children in total are offered service at 1,057 houses as of the end of 2015 (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015).

Coordination Center for Children Houses (ÇEKOM)

It is a center established for planning of the children houses in the provinces, carrying out all procedures for their opening and functioning as well as management, track and auditing of the expenditures and ensuring coordination between the houses. There are 76 Coordination Centers for Children Houses available in 75 provinces across the country as of the end of 2015 (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015).

Child Protection, First Response and Evaluation Unit (ÇOKİM)

Child Protection, First Response and Evaluation Units are responsible for providing services to meet accommodation and basic needs of the children until a court decision has been made and/or an appropriate service model has been determined about the children in need of protection or pushed into crime. There are 46 Child Protection and First Response Units available in 36 provinces across the country as of the end of 2015 (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015).

To sum up, the basic service policy of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies for the children in need of protection involves providing children with family-based services models without placing them under institutional care; returning those under institutional care primarily to their families or providing them with foster care and adoption services; placing those who are taken under institutional care and cannot be provided with family-based service models into child houses or child care houses (sevgi evleri) which are house-type service models and transferring the children who are pushed into crime or victims of crime to the specialized institutions" (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015, 196).

Ministry of Family and Social Policies constitute an important part of the child protection system with its foster care and adoption services. This issue will be addressed in the following section.

Foster Family Services

This type of care was developed with the idea that it would be more appropriate for the children who have to live apart from their families for a while after a family breakdown to be placed in

Table 1. The Statistics for Affiliate of Department of Care Services

Affiliate of Department of Care Services			
Type of Affiliate	Number	Capacity	Usage
Nurseries (age of 0–6)	1	50	37
Orphanage (age of 7–12)	3	158	159
Orphanage (age of 0–12)	3	288	194
Nurseries and Orphanage (age of 0–18)	6	655	319
Cluster of Child Houses (age of 0–18)	86	6,011	4,950
Orphanage for Girls	3	140	116
Orphanage for Boys	7	423	285
Child House (0–18)	1,057	6,107	5,366
Total	1,166	13,832	11,426

another family instead of institutional care. This type of care aims to help children survive this difficult period when they are separated from their family with minimum trauma and without much disturbance (Yolcuoğlu 2009, 70–71).

Children placed in a foster family are single girls or boys or siblings who have their birth parents, but cannot be taken care of by them for a while and who have lost their chance of being adopted for various reasons and determined to be placed in a foster family (Handbook for Foster Family Candidates).

The families willing to be a foster family should have a healthy marriage relationship and should not have any serious marital conflict or conflict with neighborhoods. Besides, the family members should be emotionally stable and should be working members that can take responsibilities within the family. They must accept the child's relationship with his/her birth parents and the institution (Yazıcı 2014, 255).

According to the Regulation on Foster Care (2012) "for each child placed in a foster family, a net monthly payment shall be made to the requesting foster families without any deductions in return for the expenses incurred in care, education and raising of the child. The payment shall be made based on the salary of the highest-paid public officer (additional indicators included) at the rates corresponding to the age groups are; for 0–3 years is 50%, for 4–5 years is 75%, for 6–14 years is 80%, for 15–18 years is 85% and for 19 years old more than 19 years old is 90%.

It can be said that foster care services are not common or have not developed yet in Turkey (Yazıcı 2014). However, efforts have been made to develop foster care services by means of carrying out informative activities and media campaigns about foster families in the recent years. It is reported that 1,070 children were placed in 900 foster families within the scope of the foster care services in 2015, thus the number of children provided with foster care reached up to 4,615 (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015).

Figure 1. Children Supported by Foster Parents by years
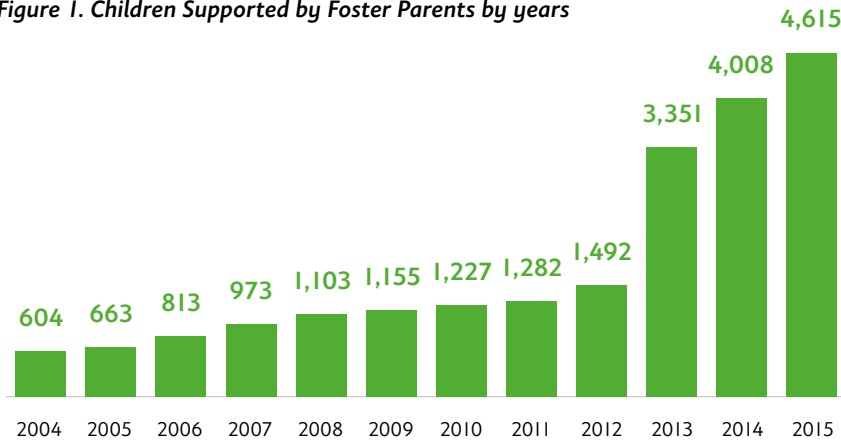
In the recent years, there has been an increase in the number of children placed in foster care. However, despite all these efforts, there are still some factors that prevent proliferation of foster care services such as the cultural factors or lack of knowledge about what foster care is.

Adoption

Adoption is considered as the best care model in cases where a child has to be permanently separated from his/her family or has no one to protect him/her (Yazıcı 2012, 505-506).

Adoption is a legal institution recognized by the consent of the court which forms a relationship by affinity similar to marital paternity between the adopting and the adopted party. The conditions for adoption, its consequences and termination are all laid down in the Civil Code (Şenocak 2006, 198).

The provisions regarding the act of adoption are laid down in Articles 305 to 320 of the Turkish Civil Code. Children whose birth parents are not known legally or officially or who have their birth parents, but cannot be properly cared for by their birth parents can be permanent and legal members of another family by means of adoption. Thus, the safety of the adopted child, which could not be ensured in the home of his/her biological parents, can be ensured in the adopting family. As a result of the adoption process, the child is taken under the custody of the adoptive family and takes the adoptive parent(s)' last name as an heir of them (Yazıcı 2012).

Among the children in need of protection living in any institution under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, those determined to be provided with foster care services are placed in appropriate foster families which are chosen by an evaluation based on the best interests of the children. As per Article 305 of the Turkish Civil Code, a child adopted by a family by a court decision as a result of the monitoring and evaluations during the one-year temporary care period is registered as the adopting family's son/daughter, takes the adoptive parent(s)' last name and has the same rights as would a biological child (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015, 182).

In Turkey, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies is the only official intermediary institution for the adoption services and functions as a Central Authority designated for intercountry adoptions based on the Hague Convention (Ministry of Family and Social Policies 2015, 182).

Figure 2. The Number of Children who benefited from adoption services by years

2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015
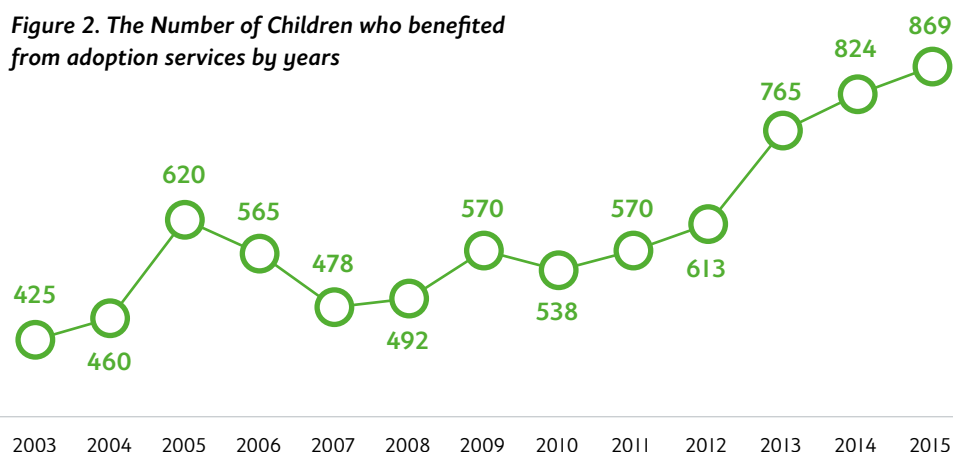
Below is the table regarding the legislation, which was used as a basis while carrying out the above mentioned services.

Table 2. Related Legislations

Regulation	Regulatory Purposes and Subjects
Regulation on Intermediary Activities for adoption of kid	The procedure for the execution of kid adaptation activities in their country or cross-border basis and are prepared in the child's best interests in focus.
The Social Services and Child Protection Agency Regulation for house for children procedures and principles	Design of procedures and principles of houses for children
Decision on the Implementation of Protective and Supportive Measures According to the Law on Child Protection Regulations	
Regulation on nurseries	0–12 age group of serving nurseries for children and other child care institutions (children's home site) regulates the working procedures and principles.
Regulation on Coordination Center for Children Houses (ÇEKOM)	For determination of roles of Coordination Center for Children houses for Children who need psychological support for pushing to crime, being victim of crime and confronted with danger in outside
Regulation on children employed in social service department where children are in care programme and able to work	
Regulation on determination examination, taking a decision for protection or non-protection of children in need of protection	
Regulation of foster family	Regulation of foster family published on 14.12.2012 dated 28 497 Official Gazette published by amending some provisions of 24.01. 2015 and it was published in Official Gazette No. 29246. For raising children in need of protection with family environment and social acceptance of it.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN PUSHED INTO CRIME OR CHILD VICTIMS OF CRIME

In the recent years, development of strategies that "support the well-being and soundness of children" and regard the best interests of them has been an important social policy dimension in many countries, especially in the European Union member states and candidate countries like Turkey. "Supporting the well-being of children" involves helping them grow up away from all kinds of risks that could potentially harm their development on the one hand, and strengthening the quality and quantity of the services that will promote their development on the other (Coordination Strategy Document for Child Protection Services 2013, 10).

For this purpose, the Child Protection Law No. 5395 came into force on June 15th, 2005 in order to strengthen the juvenile justice system (Child Protection Law 4-Year Evaluation Meeting Report 2009).

A new child protection model is proposed to support the well-being of children in Turkey. According to this model, there are two basic areas of application proposed for the child protection system. One of them is the early warning and the other one is the intervention (Coordination Strategy Document for Child Protection Services 2013, 10). The primary objective of early warning is to define the potential risks that children may face by means of risk screening. It also involves receiving support from the relevant institutions and organizations immediately under the guidance from professionals in case of the presence of risks. On the other hand, intervention means realization of regulations required within the scope of the Child Protection Law. It involves planning, taking and supervision of the consulting, education, care, health and shelter measures defined in the Child Protection Law as well as implementing them in a way to cover public guardianship.

The Ministry of Family and Social Policies also provide services to the children pushed into crime, to the child victims of crime or to the street children at risk. The services provided to these children are as follows:

CHILDREN SUPPORT CENTERS

They are the centers that temporarily provide care and protection services to the children identified to be in need of psycho-social support as a result of being pushed into crime, being victim of crime or facing social risks on the streets and for whom a care measure or protection order has been issued. These centers aim to meet the basic needs of such children, define their physical, emotional, psychological and social needs and carry out necessary interventions, return them back to their families or relatives or prepare them for the other service models.

The ultimate aim of the Children Support Centers is to mitigate the trauma of the children placed under protection and care, to help them develop their personality, change their criminal and drug-related behaviors and gain regular life skills and to return them back to their families within the shortest time possible. The center also aims to transfer the children that cannot be returned to their families to the other child care institutions.

Table 3. Statistics for Supporting Center for Children

Number of Supporting Center for Children	67
Capacity of Supporting Center for Children	2336
Number of Children who get service from Supporting Center for Children at the end of 2015	1241
Number of Children who get service from Supporting Center for Children in the year of 2015	2326

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The child protection system in Turkey can be said to have two components. One of them is the children in need of protection and the other one is the children pushed into crime or the child victims of crime. The state, and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies as an organ of the state, is primarily responsible for carrying out the services provided to these children. The non-governmental organizations operating in this field usually provide assistance to child protection by means of conducting various projects.

In Turkey, the child protection policy is mostly focused on family care and protection of children within their families. Until recently, institutional care was the common way of providing services. However, changes and improvements have been made in the institutional care as well as the efforts to switch from barrack-type institutions to home-type ones. Besides, new institutions were established for the child victims of crime or the children pushed into crime.

The general overview of the child protection system in Turkey shows that the system does not operate with integrity. There are even authors indicating that the Turkish child protection policy "does not actually represent a comprehensive and integrated policy that fulfills the necessities of the time, although there are many legal and administrative regulations, decisions and practices available about the issue" (Karataş 2007, 11–12).

There are some points that should be discussed such as the number and quality of the staff working in the field of child protection or whether the child protection policy reflects the international standards, whether the legal regulations are sufficient and success has been achieved in implementation and supervision (Karataş 2007, 11–12).

There are also some problems in putting into practice the scientific data obtained from the studies in the field of child protection. There is a lack in the development of services in line with the scientific data.

It was emphasized that the child protection system must correspond to the needs of the children and cooperation must be established between the institutions in this regard (Child Protection Law 4-Year Evaluation Meeting Report 2009).

There are also various studies reporting serious shortcomings in the adoption and foster care services. For example, Yazıcı (2012) indicates that "the number of children adopted so far in Turkey is equal to the number of children adopted in some of the European countries only within a year" and he points out the importance of implementing a family-based care model and providing care and protection to the children within their families.

In order to ensure integrity in the Turkish child protection system, different components must be gathered under a single roof, international standards must be implemented, scientific data must be used, services must be developed based on the needs of the children and cooperation must be established between the institutions.

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Part II:

Children and Childhood in Foster Care

Eugen Simion

Psychosocial consequences of child maltreatment

"For to everyone who has,
more will be given,
and he will have more than enough.
But from the one who does not have,
even what he has will be taken away
from him."
Matthew, 25–29

INTRODUCTION

Child maltreatment represent a traumatic experience and must intervene effectively to redress the consequences that otherwise will accompany it and later the adult during his life. It is difficult to generalise the consequences of the types of maltreatment, as the scale and the seriousness depend on numerous factors. For example, a child subjected to isolated sexual abuse, at the age of 13, with an unknown person, will live and treat the experience in a completely different way compared to a child that has been subjected to a sexual relationship at a very small age and with a close person, emotionally significant or to whom he is in a relation of dependency. "It's easy to think that the child will forget and he will not remain with anything from his painful experiences. But all the clinical experience shows the opposite; physical memory is on the forefront of the human suffering and these pains can wander like ghosts haunting the empty rooms of a castle. There is infantile amnesia but this does not mean that nothing remains of the early experiences." (Robert-Ouvray 2001, 171.)

Because the relationship between abuse and neglect or between different forms of abuse and neglect is one of interconnectedness, one or more forms of neglect can turn the presence of certain causal factors in one or more forms of abuse, misuse and neglect and could constitute, in turn, cogenerated, complementary in different facets of ill-treatment, it is quite difficult to classify consequences of ill-treatment in accordance with the chapter on taxonomy in the chapter on its forms.

Therefore we operate also with the new classification proposed by Ionescu, direct consequences of ill treatment on child development and long-term consequences (Ionescu 2001, 28), to which we add two taxonomies proposed by us, namely consequences in the sphere of assuming and normal expression of sexuality and the consequences of neglecting the development needs of the child.

Cleavage, as a mechanism, survival strategy, operates a split of the psyche into two parts: one is agonizing under the threat of suffering, the other becomes a source of recovery, light, healing. During the abuse, the child transfers the suffering to an imaginary person ("it is not me", "it does not happen to me.") to mitigate its effects.

Behind these seemingly different survival strategies we will find the same feelings of helplessness, confusion, guilt, anxiety, sadness, emptiness, depression and aggression. Survival strategies and mastering of the situation, how the child is coping with maltreatment, to defend against both their own feelings and hostile environment. With these strategies he provides some control over the situation, or at least an illusion of mastering the situation.

PSYCHOSOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

1. Direct consequences

We can realize if a child has been subjected to some form of abuse or neglect observing and analysing the changes in his behaviour until then.

Regarding the direct consequences of ill-treatment, may be mentioned consequences of physical abuse (burns, wounds, contusions, repeated and multiple fractures, somatic fragility), sexual abuse (rashes, abrasions, infections and injury to the genitals, sexually transmitted diseases, hormonal disorders).

Also, maltreatment generates different psychopathological disturbances in children: psycho-somatic disorders, disorders of sphincter control (enuresis and encopresis), eating disorders (nausea, anorexia, bulimia), sleep disorders (insomnia, anxious dreams), abnormal behaviour (aggression or withdrawal, self-mutilation), compulsive sexual activity, depression, neurotic disorders (phobias, such as fear of the dark) or psychotic (dissociation, misperception of danger, overwhelming thoughts).

In general, the consequences of ill-treatment can be found at the following levels (Conference 2003):

· general state: dealing with situations of abuse consumes energy, which leads to height and weight development delay, language deficiencies, food deficiencies, sleep disorders;
· somatic disorders: rickets, early insomnia, enuresis, psychosocial dwarfism, mental anorexia;
· clinical appearance: lesions consecutive direct trauma (bruising, abrasions, hematomas in unusual places, scratches, pulled hair, bone fractures, limb deformities, injuries to the central nervous system, brain or retinal bleedings, damage of internal organs;
· behaviourally manifestations, polarized either towards unconditional obedience, either to instability: does not want to sit down, motivates strange the marks on the body, does not remember their cause, avoids any confrontation with the parent, seems overly docile, callous or bizarre, with reactions of motivated physical defence or, conversely, showing defiance and violence in interpersonal relationships, challenging attitudes, from the desperate need of attention, hyperactivity caused by repeated frustrations;
· emotional feelings: fear, distrust, low or absent curiosity, anxious vigilance, child "jelly-fish"* dumbfounded to the entourage, vulnerability to stressful situations, difficulties of self-control, understanding, learning, dreams, nightmares, anger, poor motivation, fear of separation.

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* Term introduced by Suzanne Robert-Ouvray in ABUSED CHILD, JELLYFISH CHILD, referring to the hardening that was subjected the one that, in greek mythology, looked in the eye Medusa, one of the three harpies.

All these aspects have to be considered as signs of maltreatment as pathological manifestations through which the child seeks to reveal the aggression he was subjected to.

2. Consequences on child development

Consequences, effects of child maltreatment, depend on different variables that must be considered when we propose adopting the most appropriate, customized methods of support, assistance, therapy to help the child in resumption of his development:

· type of maltreatment,
· severity and frequency of maltreatment episodes (variables very hard to be defined);
· developmental stage of the child on the moment of maltreatment;
· author of maltreatment (variable very important especially in cases of sexual abuse);
· placement of the child outside the family because of inter-family maltreatment;
· sex of the child (variable to consider especially in cases of sexual abuse);
· existing support and assistance (child's social network);
· variables of family system (type of family, intra-family relationships, division of roles and tasks etc.).

"The most obvious effects of child physical abuse are being observed in the sphere of behaviour, physically maltreated children being predisposed to development of abnormal behaviour. Also, cognitive ability and the education process were found to be lower compared to those children who have not suffered physical abuse". (Spanu 1998, 79.)

Some of the individual or environmental characteristics can constitute protection factors that will allow children to compensate the effects of the maltreatment, to resume their development in secure conditions.

"We can cite as an example of environmental protection factor: a network of social support in the neighbourhood, existence of a model for successful schooling or engaging in sports activities. Individually, problem solving skills, better coping* abilities, self-confidence and robustness of health are health protective factors." (Kimchi 1990.)

3. Affective/emotional consequences

Most of the maltreated children suffer from emotional deprivation, the most serious events occurring in the cases of abandonment. Abandonment leads to specific shortcomings of maternal care.

Emotional deprivations influences negatively, affects cognitive development and overall development of the child, the most important issues are those related to intellectual processes (acquiring language, capacity for abstraction) and aspects of personality (ability to bind and maintain deep and meaningful interpersonal relationships, ability to master their impulses in favor of long-term goals).

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* From TO COPE WITH; term introduced by Lazarus in 1966 and defined as all cognitive and behavioural efforts intended to control, reduce or tolerate situations, internal or external demands that threaten or exceed the resources of an individual.

Another variable affecting the effects of abandonment is the age of the child. The most vulnerable period is between six months and two years. For this reason in Romania it was banned the adoption of the measure of placement in residential system for children who are less than two years old and for whom must be established a protective measure, except when the child needs specialized care that can't be achieved in the family.

Possibility to spend about two years (significant differences occur, depending on the authors) in the stable home environment is a strength factor for separation and subsequent placement in a less stimulating environment. When mother-child bond is already built, separation causes specific, negative effects. However, some children evolve normally despite deficient situations, which leads to the idea of considering individual differences in reaction.

Abused or neglected children exhibit attachment proving insecurity, an atypical type of attachment called disorganized/disoriented or type D pattern.

This disorganized attachment is expressed by bizarre behaviour that occurs in relationships with people who work with children, such as, for example, interruptions or blockings in the relationship. Maltreated children have, generally, patterns of atypical attachment, type D. In 89% of cases, compared with less than 20%, for a population of children who have not been abused, according to studies conducted by Carlson, Cicchetti, Barnett and Braunwald, in 1989. (Carlson 1989.)

Expressing emotions is also disrupted in the case of maltreated children. They express less positive affects than other children. Neglected children show generally less affection, while physically abused children express more violent reactions, have quick reactions to aggressive stimuli. In a normal social situation abused children will not adapt their reactions to others, as a reaction to the dramatic episodes they experienced. Faced with friendly approach, maltreated children will have, in general, inappropriate reactions, either of avoidance, or will react aggressively to others' emotional expressions.

Generally maltreated children perceive themselves as having fewer qualities compared to those who were not abused or neglected. At the victims of sexual abuse you can meet also a stressed sense of guilt and shame, especially if at some point they have felt some pleasure or even evokes self-esteem damage and altered body image, feeling of being dirty. Comparing the psychological characteristics of children who have been subjected to chronic and situational neglect*, Peretti, Early and Chimura highlight the fact that there are five features more common to all subjects: withdrawal, anxiety, sudden shift from one state to another (dreamer, aggressive-passive, aggressive), social inadequacy (lack of ability and social initiative, poverty of social relationships poverty), low self-esteem (Peretti 1996).

Even if these features appear in most neglected children, isolation and anxiety occur mostly in children subjected to chronic neglect, while anxiety and transitions from one state to another are characteristics of children who have suffered situational neglect. In the case of physical abuse, feelings of inferiority persists into adulthood. Communication is difficult, marked by violence. Violence is experienced as a means of exchange, as an interpersonal attachment, especially if it was a model of parental aggression. "It produces a strange identification with this model, because violence was perceived as a sign of interest of the parent to him." (Conference 2003.)

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* situational neglect-neglect that last less than two years.

4. Consequences on other aspects of child development

Maltreatment affects the physical, motor, cognitive and language development of the child, as well as social skills, capacities of autonomy, acquisitions in the plan of adapted behaviours procurement plan and playful capacities. Neglecting proper nutrition needs of the child, of the sanitary needs leads to immune system damage, to various infections, dental cavities, recurrent diseases.

Maltreated children are more often hospitalized and in the plan of physical development it is observed a growth retardation caused by neglect (Kendirgi 1996).

Abuse and neglect causes neurological side effects affecting the brain regions that are responsible for memory, learning, regulating affections and experiencing emotions. Maltreatment at an early age generates fixations on fear responses which lowers the potential of child development, brain organizing solely on survival. Regarding motor development, maltreated children have generally inferior results compared with those not subjected to abuse in terms of motor skills and coordination.

The study coordinated by Palacio-Quintin and Jourdan-Ionescu in 1994 allowed the comparison of intellectual development of 38 maltreated children with that of an equal number of children who have not been maltreated, the two groups were equivalent in terms of age, sex, socio-economic and family structure (single parent or two parents) (Palacio-Quintin 1994).

Maltreated children have been shown to have a much lower intellectual development than children who were not maltreated with a difference more pronounced in terms of verbal intelligence. The only positive result on abused children revealed in this study is that, at the autonomy level, neglected children are not distinct by children who were not maltreated. They do not show any retardation in this area of development. But this relatively good level of autonomy reflects, in the authors' view, rather learning made in response to the context of neglect and evokes an anxious autonomy of survival.

A survey conducted by Hughes and DiBrezzo in 1987, mentions a delay in language development, especially in the expression, delay affecting the expression of the child's needs, both in terms of physiological needs, such as hunger and also in the plan of feelings expression (Hughes 1987).

Maltreated children develop lower social skills compared to other children that may be associated with the type of disorganized attachment that characterizes them.

In another research conducted by Howard in 1986 on a group of 12 children aged between 1 and 5 years, compared with 12 children who were not abused, of the same age and from the same socio-economic environment, at the level of game development it shows that those abused look an hour and a half each day more time on television than those who were not abused. Maltreated children have less tendency to play, leading to a delay of 8.4 months at the game versus actual age, especially at the level of imitation and participation (Howard 1986).

Also, the same study shows that the maltreated children use less symbolic play and prefer repetitive they play themselves, this is also because the abusive family environment promotes rare opportunities to play pleasantly with children.

"The repeatedly play of the child, the lowering its degree of creativity, reducing its capacity for learning are signs of regression in the overall behaviour of the abused" (Roth-Szamoskozi 1999, 121).

5. Consequences on school adjustment

Maltreatment has negative consequences in terms of school performance, affecting academic progress. In a study on the effects of maltreatment on school success conducted by Erickson in 1989 he notes the existence of a much larger number of pupils who repeat school, meaning that 65% of neglected children and 50% of those physically abused repeat the first year of school (Erickson 1989).

In most of the cases, these children do not get family support for homework and no external motivation for academic success. Also, children exposed to family violence show learning difficulties that are related to the cycle of violence they witness and the climate of tension in which they live. The same author states that, at neglected children, school adjustment problems are more serious than for the physically abused children. They are described by teachers as being inattentive, unable to understand what to do, without initiative, anxious and dependent on the help and encouragement of teachers.

Attachment proving insecurity they lived does not prepare them to achieve a learning experience with a stranger, meaning that teacher. At school, neglected children have withdrawn behaviour, aggression, do not show empathy and do not cooperate and, because they show rare positive emotions or sense of humour, are not too popular among their peers.

All these characteristics of maltreated children (cognitive impairment, problems in relationships) and a lack of motivational support at the home, lead to a poor prognostic for their school success.

School and family are not separable. Children who fit best in school are those who have formed secure attachments in family. In turn, the success or failure of school changes the family environment and the trajectory of social orientation.

School failure is perceived differently for boys and girls. Girls adapt to failure making the "little child", to arouse feelings of protection, while boys tend to rehabilitate the wounded self-esteem by anti-social behaviours or aggressive acts.

6. Consequences in the scope of assuming and normal expression of sexuality

In *accommodation syndrome in the sexual abuse of the child*, Roland Summit described in 1983 how the child sexually abused in secret, without relief and caught in this trap adapts psychologically, in time, to this abusive interaction, which becomes gradually a seemingly normal event. "It develops primary psychological structures that allows psychological survival at the cost of severely distorted perceptions of the external world and the emotional reality". (Summit 1983.)

There may be a state of altered consciousness in which pain is removed or the child may dissociate from his body as if he were watching from a distance a child suffering abuse. Psychological mechanisms that help the child to cope abuse later in adulthood, will become a handicap for effective psychological integration. "If the child is able to achieve the purpose of psychic economy in order to reconcile, continuous resentments, intolerance to helplessness, anger and feelings of unruly anger will actively seek to express themselves". (Furniss 2004, 34.)

To survive sexual abuse, children try to dissociate the sexual experience, creating a pseudo-state of normality. Thus, some claim that they are not the abused ones and try to see abuse from distance, others enter into altered states of consciousness and claim that they sleep, that everything

happens in a dream, others, claim, during sexual intercourse that the bottom part of the body does not exist.

State of mind of those sexually abused is like the one of the survivors of concentration camps, described by Bastiaans, in 1957, in the paper named "Syndrome of the concentration camp", in which the extreme mechanisms of survival, of normalization developed during life in the camps, lead later in adulthood, to the psychological states of reliving this experience, when stressful events of life displaces current adjustment and defensive mechanisms. (Furniss 2004.)

Sexual abuse of children with the syndrome of secrecy and the concentration camp syndrome can lead to personality disorders related to guilt and the personal value of the self and the aggressor-victim relationship based on dependency, loyalty and guilt. In some cases, both for the child and the abuser, may appear extreme forms of dissociation present in multiple personalities, in which the "isolation and destruction of reality by the external manifestation of secrecy, changing the father into <<*another person*>>, creating that <<*lost time*>> and creating physical distance between abuse and non-abusive interaction" (Furniss 2004), all of these expressing however, in fact "the extreme form of the failure to create a real integrated experience" (Furniss 2004, 35).

Another effect of sexual abuse as a syndrome of secrecy is the sexualized attachment determined by sexual arousal and secondary reward (elements of the positive experience from the sexual abuse) and leads to an extremely loyal behaviour in some children and teenagers.

"Sexual abuse can bring up a child in the role of pseudo-partner that the child might wish to maintain even at the expense of emotional disorders and confusion. The strong attachment of the victims towards the abuser in some cases, reflects the attention the child receives related to the abuse he is subjected to that may be the only form of parental attention enjoyed by the child. Despite some negative effects children might not want to end this relationship which they perceive as positive until they have a chance to live alternative experiences." (Furniss 2004, 35.)

Sexually abused children on long term seem to develop adaptive hard coping mechanisms to relieve the tension induced by stress, thus accustomed to cope with stress and high levels of anxiety through a direct discharge of the tension in the addictive behaviour (eg. sexualized behaviours, compulsive masturbation, addiction of drugs, solvents, alcohol, minor tranquilizers or other drugs). (Furniss 2004, 37.)

Alice Miller, in the paper named the "Revolt of the body", uses the metaphor of "carousel" to explain what happens when the body of children is abused in order to satisfy the sexual needs of adults: "This rapidly spinning in circle could seem to their bodies as something foreign, unusual and scary". (Miller 2006.)

"A girl who is sexually abused and her mother barely touches her, because she rejects it and, as a result of her own childhood, she hides all her feelings of affection towards the child, will be hungry for comfort, that gratefully accepts almost any physical contact as the fulfilment of a desire to be touched. However, the child will be feeling confused if its own being, his longing for real communication, tender touch will be operated mainly by the father only". (Miller 2006, 70.)

It may be that this child may suppress deep his feelings of disappointment, sadness and anger over the betrayal of its true being, on the unfulfilled promise and to cling on as a father, because he can't give up hope that one day the promise of the first caresses will be respected, the child will get back his dignity and will be shown what love is.

7. Consequences of neglecting the development needs of the child

In the case of neglected children, their development is seriously affected. The lack of responses or stimulation can result in delayed psychomotor development and language and poor concentration. "As time passes these children will stop crying and communicate their needs. Their natural babbling will stop developing in a normal language. They do not have the chance to explore and learn something about the environment beyond the place where they sleep". (Constantin 2004, 128.)

Many neglected children take on a kind of an adult role at an early age to make up for what their parents gave them. They must take care of themselves and often their own parents. It happens that this kid to be praised by adults for its behaviour precautions and mature conduct without anyone noticing that he is deprived of his childhood. It is perhaps the most important damage that might not be noticed until much later.

Regarding the emotional registry consequences of neglect can be very different. The neglected child shows an attitude of indifference or timidity and has a reduced capacity to organize freely his activity. He lacks curiosity, presents attention disorders, a threshold too high or too low to frustration and somatizes easy (headache, abdominal pain, nausea, etc.). Also the neglected child has no future aspirations.

Socially, neglected children establish fragile social contacts, have difficulties adapting and trying to fill unmet needs sometimes by antisocial facts (individually or entering into groups of offenders) with drug use, run away from home, school absenteeism, acquiring poor ethical-moral norms.

Children in situations of abuse are weak, confused and anxious, but they do everything they can to survive. Many of them are investing heavily in solving their own problems for survival. The child's need to solve problems can appear very nuanced in abusive families. Many of these children want with their whole being to become independent.

"Neglected children who have strong resources can be very quick in becoming autonomous, to a certain extent. They get to learn to walk, dress early, succeed in feeding themselves from a relatively small age … to survive. These children also grow like dandelions that appear in the asphalt cracks, despite the vicissitudes of life. They seem to have one thing in common and that is to develop attachments to people outside the family". (Killén 1998, 100.)

8. Long-term consequences

Many of the short-term effects of maltreatment become permanent while leading to consequences that may favour the marginalization of the person. Teen abused in childhood will develop easier antisocial behaviours, being more prone to drug use, committing crimes etc.

The fact that he lived or lives a form of abuse or neglect increases the risk of initiating delinquent acts, to break prescriptive rules. A study conducted by Widom compare the judicial evolution of persons identified as battered 20 years ago (physically and sexually abused, neglected) with that of a control group (equivalent to sex, age, race and socio- economic level). This study allowed the observation to the group of people abused in childhood compared to the control group, a larger number of violent behaviours, a greater number of offenses and the age at first offense. (Widom 1989.)

Disorganized attachment lived by maltreated child is found in adults who have attachments proving the lack of security, described by Dante Cicchetti as *relational pathology* (Cicchetti, 1990).

Adults who were abused live in isolation and are afraid of privacy. They talk very little with the people who attend them, react by withdrawing or violent behaviours. In love or marital relationships they frequently initiate live scenes of domestic violence. The lack, in childhood, of suitable educational patterns generates inappropriate parental attitudes based on violence. Because of abusive parental authority or total or partial resignation of the parent during childhood, when they become adults and parents, they oscillate between weakness, indecision and rigid authoritarianism or, in turn, adopt a total parental resignation. It can also highlight the relationship between job loss and child maltreatment, situation of unemployment, loss of family breadwinner status implying an additional economic stress.

These consequences must be reduced through a series of interventions, both traditional (individual therapy, art-therapy, family education) and innovative (family support, virtual support groups, etc.). It is also necessary to use community support and development of individual or family protective factors.

The effects of childhood abuse are found in a behaviour marked by difficulties of adaptation and social integration. They manifest simultaneously or consecutively over the entire personality of the child in the cognitive, emotional, moral and sexual level.

Structuring the child's personality will bear the effects of abuse and will be marked by a callous attitude in social networking, the feeling of stigma and a negative self-image. To appreciate the particularities of the effects of traumatic child abuse we must proceed from the fact that the understanding of self and the world of children, which is in full construction and development, allows them only limited representation on the circumstances in which the trauma occured and nor can restore in memory the complex deployments of human actions that led to disaster. Another important factor to be taken into account when we consider the effects of child abuse is the environment in which it occurred, respectively in the family or extra-family environment.

The abuse occurred outside the family shatters the child's understanding to safety of the outside world, but is offset by the fact that he can live defended by the affectionate parental figures, feeling safe in his family. Difficulties understanding the traumatic event are overcome by adaptive mechanisms which, in this case, have a simple scheme - the outside world can be dangerous, but in their families is safety and trust gained through this emotional support. The situation is completely different when the traumatic experience occurs within the family and the family figures of affection and protection become sources of aggression. In this situation, adaptive, compensatory efforts of the child often reach a dangerous impasse.

The tragic effects of child abuse may be generically described as consequences of trauma. The concept of trauma is taken from medicine, where it is defined as a condition of the body.

"In cases of abuse, the term is used to indicate danger on the psychological, emotional, cognitive and social behaviour functions caused by inadequate behaviour of the parent or caregiver" (Irimescu 2006, 133).

Specialist approaches from medical area on child maltreatment were focused primarily on physical abuse and focused on "open" wounds, paying less attention to the emotional repercussions, much more subtle, subtle compared to them.

Fractures, wounds, burns, do not necessarily lead by themselves to lengthy emotional, cognitive and social problems, to disrupt a child's development. The disruptive effect, occurs psychologically

when wounds are caused by the person in which the child invested emotionally, in these situations the source of aid becoming the source of attack.

The reactions of children to abusive situations depends greatly on the type of form of abuse to which they are subject, the age at which they suffered abuse, the comprehension of reality, the characteristics of traumatic events (repeated abuses will have more serious effects than single, isolated), their personality characteristics, vulnerability or resistance to stress, the help they get from adults from their environment.

The emergence of psychotic diseases (hallucinations, delusions, and impaired judgment) are more likely in adults who suffered severe childhood abuse. Thus, hallucinations are more common in patients who reported experiences of sexual abuse, especially those who have experienced incest, delusions are more common in those who reported physical abuse, abuses, suffered in childhood are significant predictors of eating disorders (bulimia and anorexia), anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug addiction, suicide. (Bichescu 2003, 230.)

9. Survival strategies

The survival strategies are ways in which the child reacts and tries to cope with the situation of threat in the best way possible. Every child needs to be its own master and to handle by himself the situations.

The survival strategies that the child will develop depend on the temperament, physical development, child vitality, sensitivity, creativity and intellectual capacity. The survival strategies may be more or less constructive, evaluation can be made according to further development of the child and its interaction with others.

Grey and Kempe described in 1976, two survival strategies that children use in situations of maltreatment, strategies "extremely well adapted" and "hyperactive and destructive" (Gray 1976).

Children who developed the first strategy behave so as to fulfil the wishes and expectations of the adults.

They are often hypersensitive to signals sent by adults, aiming how the child should behave. These children "are trying to take control both over them, and those around, the various negative aspects that presents the life they lead" (Killén 1998, 101).

They always observe the attitudes and moods of adults and tries to behave in such a way as to avoid their anger and violent reactions. They also know that parents` reactions are unpredictable. "Verbal ability of these children is often quite well developed. They can begin to speak at any time begin with fervor to divert attention. Christensen called this strategy as *verbal stupor*". Child's ability to comply with adult expectations and meet their needs is expressed more dramatic and troubling in children who have been sexually abused. Some of them may develop a strong sexualized behaviour. By this they have learned to thank the adults and receive a response from them. Children who use as defense strategy «exaggerated» adjustment often exhibit behaviours and skills that are much higher on the appropriate operational level to their age and their resources. They will behave probably like little adults.

Children who developed the «overactive and destructive» strategy show continuously challenging, aggressive and hyperactive behaviour. They have a high degree of agitation, trouble the playing

and learning situations of others. They destroy others things, disturb those around them and create agitation. Their aggressiveness can arise from nothing. They may misinterpret very easy a look from the environment, to consider it as being aggressive and to attack to defend themselves.

This type of strategy often leads to increased rejections and confirmation that these children have no value. Rejection coming from the social network can become a central factor in maintaining and strengthening the "vicious circle" which will affect the child's development in a destructive way.

This child can easily take the role of "scapegoat" that reinforces only the confusion and poor self-image.

The survival strategies described above are more common, but may alternate from one to another depending on whether the child is. Some children may come after long years of using a strategy to change it with another. Sometimes it can be observed the so-called "unmotivated" aggression, the child showing exaggerated adaptation.

"The survival strategies can be both constructive and destructive as, depending on how it is affected the child's personality development, but also our ability to help him. Some children may go far in developing skills in limited areas, while their personality and social development is stagnating" (Killén 1998).

CONCLUSIONS

According with the features of Matthew effect, risk factors for child abuse or neglect determine themselves and are conditioned in the same time, multiplying the range of consequences on the psychosocial development of the child.

Introduced initially as a theory of cumulative advantages in science, Matthew effect was quickly transferred in the social sciences, as a theory of cumulative disadvantages.

If in science and in analyzing academic success, in particular, it was seen as increasing eminent scientists of already eminent indices with disproportionate credit in cases of collaboration or multiple independent discoveries (cumulative advantages), its significance, once with its introduction in social sciences changes radically, transforming later in theory of cumulative disadvantages.

"Psychosocial effects of a risk factor amplifies the direct relations with other destabilizing factors. For example, the state of unemployment can lead to diminishing financial resources of the person or family, but may lead, by changing social position, the role-status and lowering self-esteem to determine the installation of the psychiatric manifestations (depressions)." (Simion 2014, 11.)

Alcoholism can cause physical and psychological damage to the person but can be an important risk factor in family breakdown, job loss, self-esteem and social standing, committing child abuse.

After Cyrulnik, we can mention some defensive mechanisms that children who suffered abuse or neglect use:

· Sublimation, where the force to live is valued towards socially oriented activities as artistic, intellectual or charity activities;

- Control of emotions, when managing harmonious the processes, events by an attitude that makes them acceptable, desirable;
- Altruism, where the devotion to others allows you to get rid of inner conflicts, make yourself accepted, wanted, loved even due to happiness that you give;
- Humour, used for placing at a distance the traumatic events traumatic, from which you can take benefits as a comedian. (Cyrulnik 2006, 109–110.)

It can happen that children who had the worst childhood to be adults who know the most harmonious life, probably because they were compelled to implement positive defenses.

This should mean that, under certain conditions, the treatment can turn you into a thriving adult? The answer to this dilemma can only be given when we have enough longitudinal catamnestic analyzes resulted by tracking and regular observation of some maltreated children over a longer period of time.

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Yvan Houtteman

Pilgrimage as a way to deal with vulnerable youths. What can we learn from Oikoten?

INTRODUCTION

Oikoten is a Flemish organisation offering long distance walks and working projects within guest families as an alternative to closed young offenders' institutions. In this article I discuss the ways in which Oikoten provides support to vulnerable youths who are hoping to find new direction in their lives. I draw on my own experience as a companion on three Oikoten projects and on the information in the book "*Ik dus naar Compostela*" in which 30 teenagers who walked with Oikoten tell about their experience and the impact it had on their lives (de Aguirre & Vermeulen 2012).

THE WALKING PROJECTS OF OIKOTEN

The Oikoten organisation was founded by two social workers in 1982. The two were inspired by a documentary they had seen of juvenile delinquents in the United States who walked from coast to coast as an alternative to youth detention centres. The name Oikoten is derived from the Greek 'oikos' and implies 'far away from home' and 'making use of your own strength'. Today, the Oikoten organisation is situated near Leuven in Belgium and has since then organised over 300 projects for more than 500 youths. Oikoten is now part of the larger organisation, Alba, which also engages in related aspects of youth welfare. However, this article focuses only on Oikoten's initial core activity: long distance walking with vulnerable youths.

The youths involved are between 15 and 18 years of age. To label these young people 'vulnerable' or 'at risk' emphasises the lack of future perspectives they face in their lives. The miss a support network is one reason for this vulnerability. Many have dropped out of school. They lack anyone to turn to when facing life's challenges. Quite a few are young offenders who report to probation officers or case workers following sentences in juvenile court. Many have a history of drug abuse or are taking prescribed neuroleptics or anti-depressant medication.

Most of these teenagers lack confidence in their abilities and have difficulty managing strong impulses and emotions. They may feel anger towards the system and blame society for their situation. On the outside they look tough and cool but just like other adolescents they crave acceptance and belonging, while seeking to establish their own identities.

Young people usually join the programme when it seems that all other options have failed. They participate in the projects with the hope of giving their lives a new direction. The detention centres, where most of them come from, being the last step in a long process within the system and is often experienced as the end to their hopes and dreams. For those who apply to participate in

a project with Oikoten – the application is based on free choice – such a step is seen as a unique opportunity to take charge of their lives.

The staff of Oikoten select from the applicants those who they think will most benefit from a walking project and show that they're motivated to get their lives back on track. Selection is based on their application letter and an interview with the candidates.

Originally, a walking project contained six youths and two companions, but this was quickly replaced by groups of two youths with one companion – or in some cases a one on one approach.

After a young person is selected, the project leader, a member of the Oikoten staff, begins the preparation. He or she contacts the relevant network of the youth, including the family, the juvenile judge and the case worker. A written agreement is worked out where all parties express their expectations and responsibilities as equal partners.

Meanwhile, the person selected as companion, foster parent and guide for the duration of the walking project prepares the walk. The walk should take three months. The companion decides on a destination, maps out the way and draws a time schedule from start to finish, with an average of 25 km distance per day with a rest day every 10 days.

Both the young person and his or her companion are allocated a supporter, referred to as the 'achterban' (literally 'those behind'), who they choose in consultation with the staff. The role of this person is to support the walkers during the walk and in the case of the youth also after the project.

The actual preparation for the youths starts upon arrival in Oikoten. The first encounter with the open and friendly atmosphere there as well as the degree of freedom they are given is completely different to what they have experienced in the past. To some it may come as a shock. "*What is this?*" (de Aguirre & Vermeulen 2012, 59), is often heard in the first days.

Preparation also involves buying the equipment needed – such as walking shoes, outdoor clothing and tents. The youths learn how to cook on a camp fire and have some preparatory talks explaining rules and expectations. Oikoten sets out four clear rules which should be respected: No mobile phones or i-pod. Respecting the laws of the country. Every metre on foot (no hitchhiking or public transport). No behaviour that endangers the unity of the group.

The day before departure, there is an official meeting in which all people involved meet to sign the agreement in which the youth – the main party in the agreement – the relevant family-members, the juvenile judge, the case worker, other relevant partners, the companion and Oikoten each express their expectations and responsibilities. Afterwards, a small farewell party is held and the group is ready to take off.

The walk may start at Oikoten or at another point of departure. Santiago di Compostela, a Christian pilgrimage destination in Galicia (northern Spain), has been the traditional final destination. In later years, many other destinations and routes have been added and other forms of transportation such as bicycle, horseback and sailing boat have been tried out or combined. For those less eager to walk, alternative working projects in guest-families in remote areas have been organised. Although, the focus of this paper remains Oikoten's long distance walk, most of the information contained in this article is applicable to the alternative projects too.

In the walking projects, the four rules, the route and the destination form the framework in which transformation can take place during the walk. The daily routine is very simple: in the morning, the camp is broken up and the group starts to walk until they reach the new destination. In the meantime, tasks are taken to buy or prepare food and to read the map. Evenings may be spent in a local pub, around a bonfire or as guests of local people. Time takes the group slowly but steadily through different landscapes and moods towards its final destination, each carrying a backpack of about 18kg and with a budget of about 13 Euro a day for expenses and pocket money. Halfway through the walk, a 'support-visit' from Oikoten is organised where the supporters and the project leader come to evaluate progress, listen to the stories, enjoy each other's company and look ahead to the future. Also, fellow travellers from back home may join in for a couple of days or a week, breaking the routine and bringing new energy into the group.

In the first weeks, an identification with the past and the 'bad boy/girl image' remains strong. Feelings of self-doubt are experienced and the youths may question their ability to complete the walk. Mood swings are quite common with moments of euphoria being followed by periods of crisis.

After a couple of weeks, identification with the past becomes less and less pronounced and space is left to experiment with new roles and identities. Even though some may struggle with the hardships of the walk in the early days and weeks, many experience a sense of relief, which goes along with an increase in physical fitness. Ideally, the youth should no longer look upon him or herself as a delinquent with an attitude but open up to other forms of self-image, such as a pilgrim or a co-walker. This identity may be expressed with other walkers or pilgrims they meet and bond with on the road. During the walk, the youth encounters new ideas, learns to know other views about life and the world, takes on new responsibilities and explores new skills. Many are very surprised for instance by the hospitality and respect they encounter from people they don't know.

Self-esteem increases once the youths become more acceptant of themselves and others. Certainly, demons and negative thoughts are likely to surface but at the same time they acquire coping skills to stand up to their pasts, their families or their feelings.

Up to now I have described the ideal scenario or success story. There are of course projects where the bad boy/girl image remains intact and resistance, complaints and conflicts dominate the atmosphere in the group. There have been cases where participants gave up due to boredom or that they simply ran away. In cases where one or more of the rules are constantly violated or when tensions lead to physical aggression, the companion may decide to stop the project. He or she may ask Oikoten to initiate a crisis intervention. Such interventions may lead to a fresh start for the group or the decision that further attempts to proceed with the walk are futile. In some cases, where the tensions between two youngsters are too great, a group might be split in two and another companion is sought. If the project breaks up, it usually means the youth has to return to detention. Therefore, this option is postponed for as long as possible.

But there are many cases where the walk runs smoothly and the destination comes into sight. At a certain point the youth has questions concerning his or her future. Oikoten formally address these issues in a meeting with the youth once the end approaches.

Finally, reaching the destination may seem somehow paradoxical. On the one hand, there is a sense of pride and great achievement, but at the same time, the challenges of a life back home suddenly become very real. The youths return to Oikoten where they are welcomed by loved ones who join in a party as a celebration of their achievement. Now, the role of Oikoten is over and the role of the support figure (amongst others) begins.

THE 'UPROOTING' ELEMENT OF PILGRIMAGE

Oikoten conceived the artificial Dutch word '*ontheming*' for their approach. This term is a combination of the prefix '*ont-*', which means 'no', 'not' or 'without' in Dutch and the ancient Dutch word '*heem*' which means 'settling' or 'dwelling'. The term implies being removed from an environment where one was 'stuck' and secondly it refers to the process triggered by such a removal.

The English word 'uprooting' has a similar connotation. The participants, both the youths and their companion, are uprooted in order to leave their familiar situation. There is a sense of being pushed or even forced to get out of a situation in which one is stuck, to change the situation and the environment so radically that one is forced to take up on another. To be uprooted is to lose that which holds you tight and in place. The reason for doing so is because the present situation is believed to be hopeless, with little chances of improvement or a positive outcome. It is as if Oikoten is saying: "*Get up, you're rotting here, it's time to move out of here and get on the road to experience new things, people, environments, impressions. Take on a new role. It has been long enough now. Move!*"

Recently, the term 'pilgrimage' has been adopted to label the Oikoten approach and a network of similar projects in other parts of Europe. Detached from the religious or spiritual context in which this concept is conventionally understood, one can easily recognise similarities between the approach of Oikoten and the traditional ideas on pilgrimage, including the aspect of healing or becoming whole and the process of self-transformation, empowerment and stress reduction. An interesting introduction to this field of study is a collection of anthropological articles on the relationship between pilgrimage and health in the physical, the mental and the spiritual sphere edited by Dubisch and Winkelman (2005). The articles introduce a diversity of forms of pilgrimage as well as a range of motivations that inspire pilgrims to undertake the journey including rites of passage and doing penance as well as shedding light on other forms of secular pilgrimage.

THE FRAMEWORK: LEARNING BY DOING

The previous section introduced the Oikoten project and its structure. In this section I outline the different components of the approach. The concept of using outdoor activities to transform and heal fits in with a long tradition of outdoor learning going back to the German educationalist Kurt Hahn and even before to ideas proposed by Rousseau in his "*Emile, ou de l'éducation*" from 1762. The main focus in these approaches is that nature is the best environment to learn in and that action methods are more conducive to learning then merely talking. For Hahn "*it is the sin of the soul to force young people into opinions – indoctrination is of the devil – but it is culpable neglect not to impel young people into experiences*" (Hahn 1965, 3). Hahn's main goal was to build 'strength of character' and he believed outdoor activities were to best way to reach that goal. Hahn's ideas have been developed over the years and have taken on many forms, such as the outward Bound School.

Such programmes are developed with variations within the following eight building blocks (van der Ploeg 2011, 19):

1. Environment: more or less risky or abnormal
2. Activities: structured or not, more or less complex
3. Reflection: incorporated or not
4. Context: incidental or structural participation

5. Aftercare: more or less intensive

6. Guidance: more or less qualified

7. Period: short or long

8. Goals: broad or small.

Below, I will examine each of these eight components and discuss how they complement the Oikoten approach.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment or nature are not only a source of beauty and solitude, but also of harsh and challenging elements, which are futile to struggle against. A walk to Santiago or any other destination makes use of pathways which are remote and by preference only suit walkers, but which are manageable and not extreme. The environment should not be risky or abnormal and there are no peaks to be climbed, although climatic conditions may be harsh in the height of summer or winter. Safety is important and the roads taken are common walking roads which are easy to travel. Some of the paths may be steep from time to time. The paths to Santiago, which are well documented and marked, form an obvious destination for a walk, but companions may choose any other road or destination which fits into a period of three to four months. Larger towns and cities are avoided as much as possible as they distract too much from the purpose of the walk and may be a temptation to run away. For the same reason there is a ban on mobile phones and i-pods. The French section of the Camino to Santiago has been avoided over the last decade as the road has become too popular for pilgrims during the summer. Too many visitors make their way along this last part of the Camino and this can distract the youths from the process of inner change. For this reason, other destinations or paths to Santiago are favoured.

THE ACTIVITY OF WALKING

Walking is closely related to the element 'environment' and compared to other outdoor activities, such as rafting or climbing, it is simple and easy to do. However, we can say that the walk in itself offers a very clear framework. In the activity of walking, path and goal are hardly distinguishable. One doesn't walk solely to reach the destination, one walks because one walks. Furthermore, being on the road is a strong metaphor for life itself: we often use the term 'path' to express the calamities in life and the direction we are going. Another closely related image is that each step is always a step towards the end and this single step is taken each and every step. To stop walking is to stop the journey of life.

Another important aspect of walking is that it is something you do on your own, without external means or help, which reminds us of the meaning of the word Oikoten as 'making use of one's own strength'. Here the element of autonomy and self-determination become clear. The walker is responsible for his journey and makes use of his own strength. This may be difficult in the beginning or when cars pass by during heavy rain, but going through hardship is an important element of all environmental approaches. It is believed that conquering the hardship here will facilitate dealing with other hardships in the future and form the character and may bring self-confidence and pride.

Finally, walking also offers a quality which is closely linked with the slow and steady movement through space and time. A long distance walker may experience the environment as happening 'inside' of him. "*Walking is simple. You're alone with yourself and nature*" (Marnix in de Aguirre & Vermeulen 2012, 82). The surrounding nature, sounds, smells, tastes as well as the mental, sensory and emotional experiences all seem to happen within, in that which is not moving. It is as if walking moves the walker to a state of serenity, peace and clarity.

REFLECTION

This brings us to the third component, reflection. One of the main issues the young people involved in the walking projects face is learning to cope with their thoughts and emotions, which are often expressed in impulsive behaviour. The walk, however, allows room for self-reflection. The aspect of reflection is not explicitly promoted or accentuated by Oikoten but the lack of distractions in the environment and the process of walking allows for thoughts and feelings to become more easily accessible and perceived. The French philosopher F. Gros (2009, 9–16) has illustrated convincingly the importance of walking to reflection and to the development of philosophical ideas. Walking generates clear thoughts and frees the mind from its burden. "*While walking you forget the whole idea of identity, the temptation to be someone, to have a name and a history. (…) The freedom you feel during the walk is that you are no one, because the body that walks has no history property, only an ancient stream of life.*" (Gros 2009, 13, my translation)

A typical Oikoten statement is 'First walking, then talking' ('Eerst stappen, dan klappen'). This echoes the learning by doing approach that action comes before thinking and talking. It may be observed that many of the young people who participate in the Oikoten projects react negatively to all kinds of educational questionnaires, talking therapies and reflective conversations about their behaviour or their self. Hence the caution of Oikoten to formalize reflection or to move into a more therapeutic approach.

This does not mean that reflection is rejected. In the early years, one of the tasks of the companion was to keep a diary during the walk and this diary was open for the youths to read. In later years, this practice was discontinued, although it has remained important that all the group are involved in writing a regular letter home. All group members read and sign this letter, which is written by the companion and the youths are encouraged to add something themselves. The letter writing moments enhance the element of slowness. This is a further reason for the ban on mobiles and internet. One needs time and reflection to write a letter. The letter not only serves to inform those at home about what is going on, but also offers the group the chance to reflect in a structural way about what is at stake in the group. In this sense, a letter provides a basis for group discussions on things that have occurred or ideas that were formed. Generally speaking, reflection is encouraged in whatever way it comes, without formalising it.

THE CONTEXT

Fourthly, the context has an important role in the approach of Oikoten. As we have seen before, the context is important from the outset and this is formalised within the signed agreement between all partners as equal partners: judge, case worker, support figure, companion, the youngster, and family members. Every member of the context has formulated his or her expectations and commitments. A lot of care and caution is given to this aspect which is finalised with a written

agreement, to be signed by all partners. This agreement is not merely a paper, but a core tool in the approach. All walkers carry the agreement with them on the walk. It provides a framework that all partners should be obliged to follow.

Instead of an individualised educational plan or a theoretical diagnosis with several goals or tasks normally used in youth care, the agreement is a commitment between equals. The youngster is not seen as a 'problem to be treated' but as a responsible person, as are all others who signed the agreement. Whenever necessary, the agreement is referred to by the group.

During the walk, the support person will visit once or twice. This person is involved in the follow-up support after the walk and hence, he or she has an important role in considering future possibilities together with the youngster. This may be assisted living or other forms of appropriate care. Furthermore, one should include the companion and all fellow travellers as part of the context. The presence of others serves as a mirror or screen upon which the youngster may project his ideas, thoughts and feelings. Hence once in a while, a volunteer – for instance a friend of the companion or a future companion – are engaged to walk with the group for a couple of days.

THE AFTERCARE

The aftercare aspect has always been a delicate issue and for some also the Achilles heel of the project, as the organisation is no longer responsible for the youngster once the project is over. In most cases, all judicial sentences and convictions are removed after the walk has been completed and the youngster can move on with a clean record. It is however, not inconceivable that the youth relapses into old habits once he or she is back in a former environment. Here, the support figure comes into play as well as the role and importance of a realistic and feasible plan for the future.

One may hope that the project has planted a seed of resilience, but this is never sure. Resilience refers to the extent an individual is able to cope with stress and adversity. It is believed that the youngster has learned to cope with stress and adversity during the walk and that this ability may create a bouncing back or a 'steeling effect' in times of hardship.

The French psychiatrist and neuroscientist Boris Cyrulnic has published several interesting and controversial ideas on the subject of resilience. He challenges traditional psychology in thinking like car mechanics when looking at childhood trauma, as if these traumas could explain all subsequent suffering in a similar way that a blocked carburettor explains the splutter of the engine. For Cyrulnic, "*our history doesn't determine our destiny*" (Cyrulnic 2011, 13). Human beings are far more capable of dealing with trauma and fighting back, if they get the chance to reformulate their life stories into positive ones rather than being victimised and believing they are victims, which then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Important in Cyrulnic's view is the role of a positive story about oneself and a positive self-image. Hence, Oikoten has added a so called 'outsider-witness conversation' into aftercare (Vermeire 2011).This is a form of narrative therapy whereby the youngster is encouraged to formulate '*preferred accounts of identity*' in which a positive self-concept is shown as well as confidence in one's strengths and abilities.

For some youths, completion of the walk is the first positive achievement they have experienced in their lives and can be seen as a rite of passage. After the uprooting at its beginning, they are invited to take root again and to incorporate this positive experience in their lives. Recently

Oikoten has introduced some new elements to acknowledge and celebrate this "rite of passage". The youths may present a small work of art or put on a small performance and leave a message to the group setting out on the next walk.

GUIDANCE

The sixth component refers to guidance. In this matter, Oikoten explicitly chooses non-professional guidance. Companions are interim workers who are freelance and usually give up their normal job for a period of time. Potential companions go through a strict selection procedure. They are expected to be open-minded and tolerant to enable them to develop an authentic relationship with the youth. They should be over 26 and have developed some life experience. They should also be physically and mentally fit and be aware that the process of 'uprooting' is also theirs. The walk should be a new experience for the companion too.

Formal pedagogical and psychological skills are not required. A professional may use strategies, tricks and methods which he learned during his or her training as a helper or coach. Such an approach may easily push the youngster into a role of dependence and this is considered to be counter-productive. In my own opinion, the main quality of a companion is the ability to deal with the youngsters in an open and non-judgemental way.

Although the companion acts as a foster parent, is legally responsible for the youngster and represents the standards of the organisation, he or she has few possibilities to sanction the youth, except the drastic decision to stop the project. However, the walk and the setting make each problem which an individual encounters or creates the problem of the whole group. This element becomes clear very quickly and offers the chance to understand the need to take responsibility.

In a small group with a special goal, everyone is forced to take on responsibility. No one can carry all of the utensils of all food, no one can walk without a map. Hence to take up responsibility is a learning process and the companion has a role here to provide an example in his own behaviour as an example to the youth.

Jan Masschelein, professor Education at Leuven University, saw the role of the companion as crucial in what he called the 'strategy of disarmament' (Masschelein 1996, 7). The walk brings the youngster temporarily into the role of pilgrim and creates a space in which "*the live activating agitation is given a chance and desire gets a new form*". The walk forces him or her to reply to the questions that arise and offers the chance break away from a previous 'frozen' strategy of continuous battle without any room for change, a role which was played over and over again. The new setting invites the participants to open up and to 'disarm'.

Disarming has to do with the creation of trust and vulnerability, with taking off your protective armour and accepting what is. The companion shows he is unarmed, and in offering full trust to the youngster, he invites the other to disarm in turn. The process of disarmament occurs more successfully in a smaller group and this is the main reason Oikoten opts for a one to one or a one to two companionship. Experience has shown that members of bigger groups are easily susceptible to social pressure and to keeping on their armour.

The main quality of the companion is to remain present, whatever happens. Indeed, during the walk, rules may, can and will be broken and things seldom turn out the way that is expected. The companion quickly learns that the differences in culture and values, such as views on health,

on time, on spending money and on managing emotions, should be accepted and that harshness doesn't work, but leads instead to alienation and disappointment. Even the smallest rejection may cause conflict, hence the need to remain present and to understand the perspective of the youngsters. Learning each other's language needs time and may also lead to crisis, which explains the importance of the role of the support figure for the companion too.

Another point to note is that it is not rare that the companion – for whom the process of uprooting is also the case – may reach his or her limits and experience a physical or mental crisis. In these cases, roles may be reversed and the youngster takes on the role of care-giver and provides support to the companion.

The work of Andries Baart (2005), who advocates "being present" as the first and foremost quality in care, is very well suited to understanding the relationship between companion and youngster. He describes presence as "*a practice through which the caregiver is attentive and dedicated towards the other in order to see what is at stake for the other – from desire to fear – and in connection there to, what can be done and what s/he can be for the other. What can be done is being done, which can only be realised with a sense of subtlety, skills, practical wisdom and loving fidelity.*" (Baart 2005, 40–41, my translation)

Trust, skills, wisdom and love are the key words here, referring to full acceptance and a strong sense that the other is doing the best he could from within his own views and perspective.

THE TIME PERIOD

Above, I have shown that the relationship is an important element in the strategy of disarmament. This human aspect implies that the process cannot be accelerated but needs time and patience. In fact, setbacks happen regularly. They are accepted. Conflicts are seen as a chance and part of the process. They are an element of this live activating agitation Masschelein refers to.

The Belgian social welfare department, which supports Oikoten financially, has regularly requested a speeding up of the process by extracting 'that which works' and moulding it into a more therapeutic approach. Oikoten have been requested to put more emphasis on preventive approaches and other methods and to apply these within a shorter time span. They have never been keen to take such a route. One cannot accelerate the process nor put it into a roadmap. The organisation has taken the decision to continue to invest in long-term projects (though less than before) as they strongly believe in the value of their approach. However, they have now also begun to develop further approaches in order to meet government demands.

THE GOAL

Finally, I will discuss what may be called the 'paradox of the goal'. The question whether the efficacy of the Oikoten approach should be evidence-based or not is closely related to questions about the goal of such projects. Evaluation of the approach remains difficult if one tries to compare rates of relapse among those who complete a walk with those who do not.

The goal aspect can be evaluated on many different levels. It should be clear that the goal to reach Santiago or any other destination is a means to reach the goals which were stipulated in the agreement. This means that the project should have facilitated the expectations of all parties involved and especially the expectations and the resilience of the youth.

At another level, the most suitable measure of subjective experience is to listen to the stories, as was done in de Aguirre and Vermeulen's (2012) work. Reading through this book gives a clear understanding of what a walk may mean to the participants and illustrates at the same time how difficult it is to generalize.

For me, the approach of Oikoten fits very well into the basic Taoist concept of Wu Wei. This principle is often translated as 'non-doing' or 'non-trying', which implies there is no goal involved and the only advice lies in 'not going against the nature of what happens'. It is all about acceptance. Ideally, the companion is very careful not to judge nor condemn the youth and accepts whatever takes place. This attitude is similar to what happens during meditation. In meditation, no attempt is made to control the thoughts. The only requirement is to return to the breath or to a mantra when thoughts come up. In a similar way, whatever appears in the mind, be it fears, desires or memories, the walker keeps on walking and in this walking an acceptance of oneself is gradually attained.

To elaborate further on this topic is beyond the scope of this article, but I nevertheless would like to refer to two quotes, which beautifully illustrate this acceptance. Katja said: "*Step one to being happy is to love oneself. That is what the walk has taught me*" (de Aguirre & Vermeulen 2012, 281) and Tom remarked: "*On this walk you learn to accept things as they are, many young people need this*" (de Aguirre & Vermeulen 2012, 312).

CONCLUSION

A lot of suffering, pain, aggression and frustration is based on the belief that we are not as good as we ought to be, that we should be different, better, wiser, more handsome, etc. Oikoten has developed an approach in which vulnerable youngsters have the chance to take on a new role and explore new possibilities of being in the world. They learn to accept themselves the way they are and at the same time, they learn to accept the other and the world as it is.

A vulnerable youngster doesn't change for the better by drilling him or her and having them comply with rules, but by bringing them into an environment which enables them to open up and accept themselves and others. And even if the youth falls back into former habits, he or she always remember the project as a positive period in their lives to which they can return in times of crises. As Marc testified: "*almost every day, I think back to the walk. This was the beginning of my life. Before, I had no life.*" (de Aguirre & Vermeulen 2012, 301.)

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Johanna Jussila

Elements of Good Institutional Child Welfare According to Young People

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I will examine what young people perceive as elements of good institutional child welfare. The article is based on my Master's thesis (Jussila 2014). In my research, I applied the method of empathy. The institutionalised young people continued a frame story I had outlined, either from the perspective of an ordinary or an ideal child welfare institution. An ordinary child welfare institution represented the realistic situation and experience that existed in that particular moment of study. The ideal perspective, on the other hand, provided the opportunity to freely bring forward the best possible practices and solutions according to the young people themselves. Both perspectives only dealt with the good elements of institutional care. This was a deliberate choice. Previous studies on the experiences of young people in institutional care have highlighted numerous flaws (e.g. Pösö 2004; Kekoni 2004; 2008; Hotari 2007). However, I considered it would also be important to examine what the young people deemed good, and the direction in which institutional care should be developed.

Twelve young persons from two different child welfare institutions participated in the study. In terms of word counts, the stories were slim, but their substance was very rich. The young described various details of good institutional child welfare. The stories of ordinary and ideal institutional care were rather similar. Both story types repeatedly included success in school activities, meaningful leisure time, friendship and the possibility of autonomy over their own concerns. A central factor in both perspectives was that workers were nice and that they had the time and will to listen to the young. The young people also longed for guidance from the workers when they were unable to act or choose correctly themselves. Otherwise, being present was seen as the most important role of the workers.

The most central difference between the ordinary and the ideal child welfare institution were the characteristics and roles of the workers. In stories from the perspective of ordinary child welfare institutions, the relationship with the workers was strongly related to the conduct of the young: good behaviour was rewarded by opportunities for choice and the workers were nice. In stories from the perspective of the ideal child welfare institution, the relationship with the workers was more therapeutic and included discussion, listening, guidance in difficult matters and support of emotions. In ideal child welfare institutions, life was more strongly based on trust and genuine opportunity to influence. In ordinary child welfare institution stories, participation was always linked with behaviour.

As a new perspective on practices in Finnish child welfare institutions, my research emphasised the importance of friendship. The longing for meeting one's own friends and freedom of choice in regard to friendship were highlighted as significant elements. Simultaneously, the young people's families were only present in the theme of participation in the sense that the young wished they

could influence when they meet their families themselves. The invisibility of families in the stories was a significant factor. There was no explaining factor for their absence. In the frame stories, the family was present, but in the young people's stories, family was practically not visible at all.

In my research, I categorised the elements of good institutional care under three main themes. The themes are a caring day-to-day life, repairing through interaction and participation. The themes are related to the cornerstones of institutional care work, which have been brought up in the previous literature as well (e.g. Niemelä 2005; Hughes 2006; Tuovila 2008; Heino & Huotari 2010; Mäkelä & Vierikko 2010; Sinkkonen 2012). In addition, studies on children who have lived in risk environments reveal that stable, safe and meaningful interactive relationships with adults are central factors supporting survival, as are hobbies and activities that offer encouraging and identity-supporting experiences (Heino & Huotari 2010, 271). In social sciences, the experience of participation is seen as a central factor for preventing social exclusion (e.g. Välivaara 2004, 10). In addition, participation is intertwined with the two previous themes, both as a value itself and in work practices. In the following sections, I will present the themes of my research in more detail.

A caring day-to-day life includes all everyday activities and care. A central part of the care and education process consists of small everyday solutions and modes of action. It includes the structures of activity, methods of action, conversational culture, eating situations, sleeping arrangements, the rhythm of everyday life, support in school activities, the overall atmosphere, cleanliness and meeting parents. The living environment and its stimuli, chains of events and the entire situation and environment in which the young person lives are central means for helping them. Regularity is the cornerstone of a caring day-to-day life and the prerequisite for the young person's trust and sense of safety. (Niemelä 2005, 70; Valtakunnalliset sijaishuollon laatukriteerit 2004, 24.) Clear, recurrent everyday routines bring security and help build an affectionate bond, thus supporting the young person's healing process. A young person coming from a difficult background needs recurring routines, so that little by little, they can gain trust in the fact that everything will sort itself out and they will thus be able to control their own life. (Tuovila 2008, 54–55.)

The concept of *repairing through interaction* is based on attachment to the caregivers in accordance with attachment theories. The process of attachment is not easy when attachment during early childhood has been difficult due to severe neglect. A prerequisite for attachment is the sensation of being heard and understood. On the part of the workers, this requires giving attention, listening, guidance, love and providing help. The starting point in helping institutionalised young people is forming an interactive relationship with the adult person caring for them. (Hughes 2006, 21–22, 35.)

Previous literature has shown that the best help for institutionalised children and young persons is safe attachment and permanence (Välivaara 2004, 14). Few institutionalised young people have received satisfactory or safe interaction. An institutionalised young person brings along their insecure and unsheltered, sometimes extremely pathological, experiences of attachment, thereby posing great challenges for the personnel of the institution. The task of the workers is to provide repairing and substitutive interactive experiences. This requires giving space even for the most difficult of the young person's emotions, as well as the worker enduring their counter-emotions in reaction to the young person. The prerequisite for repairing through interaction is that the young person can test the adults of the institution and realise that the adults will not abandon them, even when they cannot control themselves. (Sinkkonen 2012, 273.)

Institutionalised young people carry the burden of having experienced abandonment and betrayal, which poses a particular challenge for growth and development. They may have lived under

constant neglect, abuse or fear. Their way of experiencing reality might be different from the experience of others, as their reality can be branded by constant preparedness for fear. The situation can therefore not be rectified merely through the understanding of their own situation, but they need constant repairing healing interactive experiences. (Mäkelä & Vierikko 2010, 8–10.) Relationships in the everyday life of severely damaged children and young people should be therapeutic, emotional and dependent. Such interactive relationships provide them with the opportunity to feel important and loved. (Tuovila 2008, 55.) Warm and safe relationships help the young in developing their sets of values, self-knowledge and confidence and support in their progression towards adulthood. The relationships also strengthen the ability to create and maintain their own new relationships and to make choices regarding their own life. (Miller & Törrönen 2010, 72.)

Participation has been largely present in recent practices of and research on child welfare work. The participation of the child is indeed one of the core principles of child welfare, and should be taken into account in all work with children and young people (Laki lapsen huollosta ja tapaamisoikeudesta 1983/361, 1 §; LsL 2007/417, 4 §; Valtakunnalliset sijaishuollon laatukriteerit 2004, 11). The participation of a young person means that they participate in the evaluation, development and execution of services and activities regarding themselves. Participation is composed of the right to gain information on matters regarding the young themselves and the opportunity to express their opinions. (Saastamoinen 2010, 65–66.) Participation is connected to being entitled to their own point of view and the freedom to express their view, and to their viewpoint being taken into account in accordance with their age and developmental level. People working with young people should thus enable the young person to express their opinions, but also genuinely take their views into account in decision-making in accordance with their age and level of development. Participation could thus more accurately be described as the opportunity to influence. (Hakalehto-Wainio 2013, 35–36, 39; Pajulammi 2013, 94–99.)

Participation is a human right, and, as such, it is a value in itself. Young people benefit from participation. Forms of participation include experiences of being heard, that their own thoughts and opinions matter and that things can be influenced and they are not forced to remain victims of circumstances. These experiences can be protecting and repairing in cases where the young person has a background of numerous and constant neglect, abuse and deprivation. (Oranen 2007, 11.) The right to participation has an effect on development into a balanced adult. Through participation, the young person learns to act in their social community and society. Participation also strengthens the ability to carry responsibility and manage risks and the competence to act in their own concerns. It also strengthens the self-esteem and confidence of the young person. Participation builds autonomy, independence, social ability and tolerance of situations, environments etc. (Pajulammi 2013, 107, 113.)

In the following, based on my research (Jussila 2014), I will examine young people's conceptions of the elements of good institutional child care in accordance with the above-mentioned themes (caring day-to-day life, repairing through interaction and participation), which are based on the central characteristics of foster care. In some respects, I will also reflect the elements against other discussions on the matter.

A CARING DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

The young raised three central elements of good institutional care: education, leisure time activities and socialisation with friends. The success of school activities has also been brought forth

in other studies on the experiences of institutionalised children and young people (see Kaarlela 2011) as well as in the experiences of the Selviytyjät (Survivors) group of institutionalised and placed young people (Inhimillinen tekijä 2014). Succeeding in school is an important source of joy, which also affects the legitimation of institutionalisation – institutional care is deemed necessary and successful if institutionalised young people manage to complete comprehensive school during the period of institutionalisation. School forms a large part of life for young people, and it is thus of great significance.

According to the young, socialising with friends is a central feature of good institutional care. Meeting friends entails a wish that the young are able and allowed to choose their own friends. This is a rather unconventional model of thought from the perspective of the policies and practices of the child welfare institutions of today. Professionals often attempt to restrict meetings with friends due to the risks involved, such as substance abuse, delinquency and sexual relationships. The underlying thought behind these practices is to protect the young. If friendships develop problems, the young themselves have an answer: The counsellors could "guide, NOT ORDER!" the young to choose and act correctly. (Jussila 2014, 73.)

The guidance of workers was also raised in connection with other situations. The institutionalised young need help and guidance in situations where they cannot act in a desired manner by themselves. The views of the young did not take a stand in regard to when activity is undesired and who defines it. This distance seemed to leave the responsibility with the workers. The young needed guidance and help particularly in their choices, in controlling their emotions and behaviour, and in their actions. (Jussila 2014, 58.)

A third element highlighted by the young consisted of wishes regarding leisure time. On the one hand, they wish to be offered social activities, but also genuine free time, on the other. In particular, different sports activities were brought up, such as trampolining, bowling, motocross and ball games. Other activities were also highlighted, such as watching television, going to the cinema, going for ice cream or strolling in the city, playing computer games and working. The responsibility for coming up with and arranging activities was left to the workers. Of course, the young wanted to choose for themselves whether they engage in the activities or not, but they expected workers to provide options. There was a clear wish that activities and hobbies would take place together with the other young people and the supervisors at the institution. Common activities increase the sense of belonging and the establishment of trust between supervisors and young people, as well as among the young people themselves. It also improves the general atmosphere in institutions, which young people indeed named as one of the central elements of institutional care. (Jussila 2014, 58–59.)

The setting for activities was also perceived as important: having a (large) room of their own, access to television and other electronics, food and security, etc.: in general, "good conditions". Receiving help from supervisors and reasonable rules were also considered important. Interestingly, the young themselves brought up rules as an element of good institutional care. Several studies (see Kaarlela 2011) take a pronouncedly critical stance towards rule-based institutional care. In addition, in this instance, there might have been an underlying critique – while rules were brought up as a central element, the young sought to define them as good and reasonable or wanted to provide examples of sufficient rules (bedtime and curfew rules). On the other hand, the young noted how rules could also be made stricter when necessary. However, rules were not particularly prominent in the responses of the young, which is in accordance with the conclusions of previous literature that the young primarily long for something other than rule-based activities. (Jussila 2014, 59.)

As everyday practices in good institutional care, the young mentioned also a good spirit among the institutionalised young, good relationships with the others and, in general, the feeling that "everything is all right". One story described the perspective of "everything being all right" as "not having to see what you used to see any more," among other aspects. Life in an institutional environment provides a regular and secure life. (Jussila 2014, 59.)

REPAIRING THROUGH INTERACTION

In my research results, interactive relationships, which in this context refer to the professional and care relationships between young people and institutional workers, were characterised by contradictions. On the one hand, the young people longed for privacy, their own peace and the opportunity to make independent decisions. On the other, they hoped to receive help and support in both everyday activities and difficult situations. First and foremost, the young people longed for a listening and conversing adult with whom they could share the important things in their life. (Jussila 2014, 60.)

The institutionalised young primarily anticipated a listening and conversational work approach from the workers. They hoped workers would have time for them and show interest in them. The workers should also be able to confront the difficult situations and emotions young people are going through. The institutionalised young expected the workers to cheer them up when they are feeling bad (angry or sad) either through conversation or by doing something together. Workers were presumed to act professionally in all situations, even when the young themselves are not behaving properly. According to the young people, the workers should also be able to handle negative feelings and help in controlling them. Young people should have the right to make mistakes, which workers should be able to cope with – and nevertheless stay by their side. (Jussila 2014, 60–62.)

"Well, I had a bad day. I was really on edge and everything got on my nerves, but I had good supervisors and they helped. We spoke about how I could vent my anger a bit. By the time we finished talking, I already felt better and felt good the rest of the day." (Jussila 2014, 62.)

Workers were primarily expected to be nice but also fair, and have a sense of humour. The young hoped that the everyday atmosphere at the institution would be cheerful, and supervisors played a big role in this. The persona of the workers had a large impact on the quality of interactions. The young did not specify what 'nice' meant – what kind of behaviour it referred to. The young people's stories formed a picture of a cheerful worker, who could simultaneously take a humorous attitude towards the issues and activities of the young, but also take a serious approach and guide or draw limits, when necessary. (Jussila 2014, 60–62.)

The young longed for a relationship based on trust, which could be transformed into a more guiding relationship when needed. This was accompanied by a wish to live more freely than current practices allowed, to act without supervision from time to time. On the other hand, freedom could be restricted if the young person did not prove themselves worthy of trust. The young expressed a wish that good behaviour should be rewarded with more freedom and responsibility over their own actions. The workers' approach should therefore principally be based on trusting. Possible stricter rules and limits would be imposed only if the young person was unable to act in accordance with the set expectations. (Jussila 2014, 61.)

PARTICIPATION

The majority of the statements in the young people's stories were related to participation. According to the young, participation that manifests itself as having an impact on your own life was a central element of good institutional care. Everyday activities should primarily stem from the young themselves. According to young people, they should have a say in their leisure time, the company they keep (friends, in particular), issues related to their future, the everyday activities and equipment of the institution, their clothing, and issues discussed in meetings. In addition to being able to influence what is being done, young people desire the opportunity to have a say in their own participation. They hoped that participation in the activities of the institution would be up to them themselves to a larger degree compared to current practices. In addition, the possibility to express their opinion in meetings was perceived as important, which is well in line with the premises of the meeting practices of child welfare institutions. (Jussila 2014, 62–64.)

The wishes posed in regard to the young people's participation were not impossible; they longed for opportunities to influence their own everyday life. The issues brought up by the young by and large correspond to current everyday life in child welfare institutions, so substance-wise, the young clearly did not yearn for (or were not able to identify) anything drastically different. Based on the answers, the key issue was the opportunity to decide for themselves to a higher degree. The wish that deviated most from current practices was the possibility to choose their own friends. In other respects, wishes were rather modest and realistic:

"That we would get new sports equipment, PlayStation games or why not a trampoline. you could decide for example that you go someplace … like going to get ice cream."

"Everything is fine and I have a large enough room and a TV and PlayStation in my own room and also a computer." (Jussila 2014, 63.)

In addition to having an influence over their own concerns, the young raised the issue of having a say in meeting their families and leave, among others. The answers linked leave with having an influence through good behaviour, which illustrates current practices well. In the responses, the opportunity to influence leave was described as leave being 'earned' through good behaviour, as well as having a say in how leave is organised and with whom the young person will stay. The young hoped their own viewpoints would be taken into account when locations and leave lengths and frequencies were decided upon. (Jussila 2014, 65.)

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTION

In the following section, I will reflect on the results of my research from the perspective of my own work experience in open and institutional child welfare and against my familiarisation with theory. My research was anchored in the understanding of the participation of the young: children and young people are seen as active actors and producers of knowledge; as people who have viewpoints that help to develop work related to them (Karlsson 2010, 121). In order to help young people, it is important that they participate in producing knowledge of their situation, their experiences and their expectations (Hurtig 2006, 167). When I embarked upon this research, my own hypothesis was that young people themselves have numerous practical and useable suggestions on how everyday life in child welfare institutions could be improved. This was concretely con-

firmed during my study. Not one response was jesting or hyperbolic, even though the framework of the research would have also enabled such reactions. The young people had the opportunity to throw around ideas about anything, but they only produced matter-of-fact and completely useable thoughts regarding good practices in institutional care.

The wish that deviated most from current practices was the possibility for the young to choose their own friends. This referred to the possibility to maintain contact with old friends, and in general meet other friends than just those living in the same institution. This is a rather radical idea, as meeting friends is currently primarily governed through restrictive practices that aim to protect the young. However, young people have a strong longing to socialise with their friends. If this is taken into account, institutional care will have to re-evaluate its work from an entirely new perspective and adapt its work practices. A novel approach could be to change work practices so that they incorporate friends; under the supervision of adults, the young people could learn means for protecting themselves in various situations.

While the theme of friendship arose as a new characteristic in my research, it has already been brought forward in other contemporary discussions and texts on Finnish institutional care. Känkänen and Pösö (2008, 564) echoed Knorth's (2008) viewpoints on how foster care should be developed in regard to practices and policies that loosen the boundaries of institutional care. According to Knorth, the special status of institutional care should be dismantled, and institutions should be more open to the social networks of institutionalised children so that their family and friends can be a part of their everyday life as well as institutional care. Friends are important for young people. Friends provide comfort, support and understanding when life gets hard. Institutionalised young people have brought up how it is important to maintain friendships during all kinds of life changes. In the company of friends, they can feel like a regular young person, regardless of their background and life situation. (Vario et al., 2012.) Accordingly, it has been suggested that Finnish institutional care be developed so that it encompasses working with the child's entire social network (Puustinen-Korhonen 2013, 76). Such practices and policies could alleviate the differences between institutional life and life outside the institution.

Succeeding in school activities was brought forth by the young people as the first element of good institutional care, and it was present in all of their responses. In Finland, not graduating from comprehensive school places young people at a significant risk of social exclusion. Without a basic education, you are not eligible for vocational or all-round education (high school), but finding employment is also difficult. However, it is not always easy for the institutionalised young to complete comprehensive school studies: they might carry a history of experiences of failure related to school, ranging from academic skills to social relationships. It is therefore important to pay attention to education and to find individual solutions for facilitating studies. In Finland, numerous well-functioning policies are conducted in collaboration with institutional care and comprehensive school education, such as state reform schools' own special schools. In these schools, the collaboration between the institutional and educational professionals is close and individual for each young person. Many child welfare institutions have a so-called home school, which refers to school teaching taking place in the facilities of the institution under the institution's own teacher. In such cases, one of the nearby public schools is responsible for organising the teaching. The challenge with these models is that education that takes place within the facilities of the institution does not socialise the young into coping with the normal environments of society. On the other hand, extremely troubled young people might not be able to cope with a regular school education, even with the help of support measures. Through these models, school education is ensured even for young people with severe issues. The organisation of school education should always be based on the individual needs of children and young people, not on existing structures.

According to my research, the interaction between young people and workers was a central element of good institutional care. The young people voiced a strong longing for warm and safe interactive relationships with the workers. They wished that the workers would have both time and genuine interest in the young. Previous studies have highlighted rule-based interaction between young people and workers. Rules were raised as an issue in my research as well, but they were connected to interaction only as a secondary factor. In child welfare institutions, rules involve challenges related to individual treatment, on the one hand, and equal treatment, on the other. Rules should be based on the individual situations and needs of the young people. In current practices, rules are often outlined based on the situation of the most troubled people (e.g. Pösö 2004), and are largely the same for everyone. The Child Welfare Act requires children and young people to be treated individually, which also encompasses rules. Work aiming at the rehabilitation of young people requires individual solutions in all respects. Then again, young people themselves long for equal treatment and coherent rules. Indeed, some of the rules should be the same for all. Professionals must be able to justify possible individual solutions in a manner that allows the young people to trust the justification and does not give a reason to fear arbitrariness or favouritism. Individual solutions can be perceived as equal and fair treatment if you can rely on well-justified individual solutions also being made in your own case.

The young would want to be involved in deciding what activities are arranged, but they also want to decide for themselves whether they participate in the activities or not. The stories of the young illustrated situations where participation in everyday activities was not always fully voluntary. However, education involves situations in which children and young people have to be motivated to do activities they are not inclined to do. In education taking place in child welfare institutions, such situations also occur on a daily basis. However, leisure time activities should be based on genuine voluntariness, which was repeatedly brought up in the stories of this research. Voluntariness should encompass both the free will to participate or opt out of organised activities, as well as the option of choice in regard to the programme that is organised. Young people should also have the opportunity to choose their own hobbies on an individual basis. Independent coping and the prevention of a circle of institutionalisation could be supported by anchoring the young in normal hobby routines available for everyone. This is, however, rare in child welfare institutions. The reasons behind this may lie with dominant practices, but also the fact that the young people lack the social skills and the courage to develop a hobby by themselves. Individual hobbies require more resources from the institutions, but this is a central factor for young people in adapting to life outside the institution. Not all young people initially have the social skills for hobbies outside their institution, but in such cases, resources should be targeted at building up their social abilities. In practice, this can involve a worker accompanying the young person as they try out a new hobby.

In my study, the realisation of participation was also highlighted as a central element of good institutional care. Participation requires a new kind of attitude on the part of the workers, and the courage to change work practices. Artificially constructed situations in which young people are seemingly offered the possibility to have an influence on certain matters do not suffice. Nor do sporadic instances of letting young people have a say in small everyday questions. Genuine participation is only possible through the appropriate attitude of the workers, which becomes embedded in their work orientation in all situations. However, the responsibility must lie with the workers in all situations.

In my research, the young people repeatedly brought up how good behaviour earns them the opportunity to have influence. This is part of normal educational dynamics – as you act in a trustworthy manner, trust improves. On the other hand, educators have the responsibility to let

children and young people have a second chance to show that they are worthy of the trust, even after they have failed or misbehaved. This should also be the case in child welfare institutions. If participation and influence are only earned through good behaviour, how should you act with young people who are not capable of good behaviour? Following this logic, they will never gain experience of having a say in their own concerns. Participation is a right, and it should therefore not be something you must earn. In child welfare institutions, not all young people have equal participation skills. It is the workers' job to support young people in developing these skills, and this support does not merely entail controlling their behaviour. Naturally, as skills develop, the matters and situations in which the young people can participate also increase.

From the perspective of institutional care, the theme of participation is contradictory. On the one hand, young people need genuine opportunities for participation; on the other, they need to be protected from the risks these choices may entail. These are not mutually exclusive, and one cannot be used as a justification for not fulfilling the other. It is a matter of gaining a new kind of professional understanding, and of developing work practices so that they enable genuine participation while protecting young people through guidance. Children and young people need care as well as the space to grow as human beings. Understanding and managing these two factors is of paramount importance in reinforcing the participation of children and young people. (Jans 2004, 34.)

In this article, based on my previous research, I have examined what young people perceive as elements of good institutional child welfare. I have presented the views of young people through the themes of my research. The themes were a caring day-to-day life, repairing through interaction and participation. According to the young, central elements of good institutional child welfare included success in school activities, common leisure time activities, friendships and the possibility to make decisions on their own concerns. An interactive relationship with the workers was also deemed important. The young people hoped that the workers would have enough time and listen to them and that the young would get support from the workers when needed.

My research has shown that young people want to participate, and take situations where their opinion is listened to seriously. In the future, child welfare services and action practices should be comprehensively evaluated from the perspective of the young. Young people have many viewpoints that would help in developing child welfare.

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Part III:

Parenting and Parenthood in Foster Care

Markéta Rusnáková & Mária Szabóová

Values of parenthood among young adults in foster homes (children´s homes)

INTRODUCTION

In describing the problem of the researchers, we assume important facts:

a) Mothers, who were previously in institutional care, have a 52 times more likelihood that their child will be excluded from their direct care than other mothers, whom institutional care was not prescribed. An increased likelihood compared to the rest of the population is also for fathers (Mikloško 2011). As already mentioned, from our perspective, the above-mentioned value is high and need not reflect reality. In a retrospective analysis, the methodology of this research in fact showed several contentious issues in relation towards the methodology of the research. Nevertheless, in describing the problem of the researchers, we are also starting out from this published output of Mikloško's research. In this context, we are talking namely about the indisputable transgenerational transmission. In connection with Mikloško's assertion and the explored theme, we are talking about transgenerational transmission, if when the young parent from the children's home does not know or is unable to take care of their child and therefore he is placed in institutional care, as in the past, was his parent. Such an inability to take care of your child may be affected by a lack of preparation for parenthood, personal immaturity and negative and traumatising events, which could escalate into pathological behaviour or disturbed socialisation and by a lack of need fulfilment in the childhood of the parent.

b) The environment of the children's home cannot be fully-fledged, despite efforts to replace the family environment and to secure fulfilment of the child's basic needs, which are, for example, security and safety, which is usually ensured to the children by parents = attachment persons. This absence is subsequently affecting the child in adulthood, who may have in adulthood a problem with the establishment of relationships, a problem with giving and receiving love, with a relationship and parenthood, etc.

c) There is evidently an increase, but on the basis of what the authors of the research do not specify, or they are only slightly convinced and claim that the homosexuality of young adults from children's homes is higher, one such research is also Žarnay's (2009) research, which we mention in the first chapter. According to him, young women are subconsciously looking in their adulthood for a mother, while at the same time, young men are looking for a father. This issue is closely related with the absence of an attachment person and the absence of positive male and female role models, as a role model of a father and a mother. Homosexually oriented young adults thus automatically lose the opportunity to become parents of their own biological children, by which they suppress

in themselves the natural unquestionableness of being a parent. These claims are thus exceedingly strong, but the empirical data is unconvincing.

d) Hewston (2006), who mentions further studies by the authors, Duck, Fletcher and Finchman points to the fact, that the quality of family relationships determines the quality of further relationships. If the child survives some extremely negative experience with a parent, it can be assumed that he is at a greater risk and that he will have problems in contact with siblings and peers in general. In connection with our topic, we consider as an extremely negative experience with a parent, the abrupt removal of the child from his natural family environment. The child will understand a rational justification for withdrawing him from the family depending on his age and personal maturity, which can deepen negative feelings in the child. These can lead towards an array of socio-pathological phenomena also associated with parenthood.

For the aforementioned reasons, it is necessary to address the issue of parenting by young adults from children's homes and carry out research in this area, which would help to map out the current situation, based on which it would be possible to streamline preparation for parenthood within the environment of children's homes. The objective of the research is to investigate the conception of parenting by young adults from children's homes. The subject of the research is the idea of parenting by young adults from children's homes.

In the research, we find out whether the idea of parenting by young adults from children's homes is or is not significantly different from young adults who grew up in a family environment. We asked thus the following questions: How is the idea of parenting by young adults from children's homes? To what extent is the different conception of parenting by young adults from children's homes and young adults from complete families?

The subjects of the research are young adults from children's homes, young women and men within the age range as characterised by the National Council of the Slovak Republic Act No. 305/2005 Coll., i.e. they are from 18 to 25 years of age.

Signs (criteria) of young adults from children's homes: young adults from 18 to 25 years of age, student, currently to be placed in a children's home

Signs (criteria) of young adults from complete families: young adults from 18 to 25 years of age, student, permanent residence with parents, coming from a complete family - for the purposes of our work, we consider a complete family as living in a family with their own living father and own living mother.

The research sample of our research was thus formed of young adults from children's homes and complete families. The young adults from children's homes consisted of 48 respondents, 19 of whom were women and 29 were men. The average age of the women was 19.73 years of age and of the men, 19.55. There were 48 young adults from complete families, from which 19 were women and 29 were men. The average age of the women was 20.94 years of age and 21.19 years for the men. With the request for cooperation in implementing the research, we have written, telephoned and personally contacted all the children's homes in Slovakia. Due to the fact that there are no known actual statistics of young adults in children's homes, it is not possible to evaluate the percentage return of the questionnaire.

It is necessary to define and specify the *concept of an idea*. Starting with authors, who defined

the concept of an idea in 1987 up until the present day, the essence of the definition is essentially unchanged. The authors Ambramenková et al. (1987), Kiczo et al. (1997), Ďurič & Bratská (1997), Hartl (2004), Říčan (2005), Strmeň & Raiskup (2008), Hartl & Hartlová (2009), are consistent in the assertion that an idea can relate to the past, but also the future of an individual. Specifically, Hartl (2004), Hartl & Hartlová (2009), define an idea as the content of consciousness, equipped or redesigned past experience and perception. We are starting out from the aforementioned definition and that is why in the present monograph we draw attention to past experiences, in the sense that we point to the childhood or the adolescence itself of young adults from children's homes in the environment of a children's home.

Specifically, the authors Říčan (2005), Durič & Bratská (1997), and Ambramenková et al. (1987), named an idea as an image of subjects, phenomena, scenes and events, which operate on an individual's organs of perception and which arise on the basis of remembrance or productive past. Emanating from D. Huma, Kubáni (2010) characterised an idea as the centrally equipped content of the mind, which are once perceived phenomena or subjects. Štefanovič (1985 in Kubáni 2010, 53) defines ideas as "visual images of subjects and phenomena, which at a given moment we do not perceive or which we, in such a form, even did not perceive." Strmeň & Raiskup (2008, 204) say that "an idea is the memory reproduction of a perception or perception transformed by imagination". Imagination is characterised by Kubáni (2010) as a psychological process, in which a person can have in his conscious, visual images of outer subjects and phenomena, also if they are not currently acting on his receptor, or he did not at all perceive them before. Ideas are being formed on the basis of sensations. Interesting is the definition of ideas by Kiczka et al. (1997, 207), where it is defined as "*a certain content of consciousness, a subjective image of the subject created on the basis of past experience (sensations and experiences), which is a prerequisite for the creation of concepts, thinking and volitive acting. An idea is the content of consciousness created by imagination (not illustrative memory) when the subject creates - on the basis of various stimuli and needs – sensory – visual images of things and actions, with which he never came into contact, including fanciful ideas. Always, however, they consist of components of previous experience or from its derivatives.*" Also Říčan (2005, 62) says that "we can even doubt whether ideas that are something other than the memories of what we perceived in the past, actually exist." "The richness and the quality of an idea are related with the richness of sensory experiences. The differences in imagination were already studied by Galton (1880), who discovered that women and children have a more varied and colourful imagination than men" (Ďurič & Bratská 1997, 259).

Kubáni (2010) mentions the specifics of ideas as follows: They are figurative and have a subjective character. They relate to the internal, subjective area of the mind. They have an uncertain character, are incomplete and have only individual details. The individual emotional elements are distinct and clear, only some others are suppressed. They depend on will, they may be self-induced and modified. They have a hint of a sense of activity.

Říčan (2005, 68) also described the functions of ideas. He mentions that "among the functions of ideas belong the preparing of activities, the balancing of internal tensions, the substitute satisfaction of needs and participation in a cultural life".

As well as defining the concept of an idea, a number of authors also state its classification. Kubáni (2010) distinguishes the types of ideas as follows:

1. according to the degree of generalisation and abstraction as: Unique ideas as ideas of a particular subject, which have a partly generalising character. General ideas as the notional subject retains only some features and it lacks features belonging to individual

objects and the more general and characteristic features remain. The specific character-istics of individual objects disappear within them, such as a person's idea in general, and thus they are closer to a concept.

2. depending on the classification of feelings and sensations as: Visual as depicted by shapes, sizes and colours. Aural as relationship of sounds in pitch and duration. Move-ment as the motion of the body.

In the context of defining the concept of an idea, it is necessary to mention the theory of ideas. Kubáni states these theories of ideas as follows:

The theory of the unconscious is born from the basis, which was formulated by J. F. Herbart. He claimed that if the idea is not in the mind, it is "submerged beneath the threshold of consciousness" and should be kept there until a new occurrence into the consciousness. According to the theory of the unconscious, the unconscious or subconscious is a sort of reservoir, a chamber, where are undisclosed ideas, not considered at a particular time. (Kubáni 2010.)

"According to the theory, the basis for the development of ideas is an imprint incurred in the nervous system, which allows that a copy (image) of perception can be induced in the mind, even in the case when there is not any stimulus present. Based on this theory, ideas are arising centrally from impulses, which come from the central nervous system." (Kubáni 2010, 56.)

"The theory conditionally and reflexively characterises the emergence of ideas, thus due to the immediate or verbal stimuli operating at any given time, i.e. under the influence of subjects, with which the stimuli are associated" (Kubáni 2010, 56).

In the following sections we present the results of quantitative research, which we have conducted by the questionnaire method (Almašiová & Kohútová 2014). We interpret results through four areas, which we have chosen and which as a whole, in our view, constitute an idea about parenting: 1. the idea of a child, 2. the concerns associated with the idea of parenting, 3. parenting skills and 4. cohabitation or the idea of fidelity in a relationship.

THE IDEA OF A CHILD

According to the three-dimensional theory of interpersonal behaviour by W. C. Schutz (In Nohejl 2001), negative experiences, which an individual experiences in childhood, lead towards deficient, excessive (over) or towards pathological behaviour. If the child is loved in childhood and has positive feedback himself, his behaviour is ideal, according to Schutz's classification of fulfilling the satisfaction of interpersonal relationships. For the purposes of the current publication, we assume that a child who is placed in a children's home has undergone in childhood a minimum of one traumatic event. In our understanding, it is mainly a maternal loss (death, other reasons), to whom the child builds an attachment bond already during the prenatal period. The following tables present the results in the area "the idea of a child" for young adults.

Table No. 1 lists the most common answers by the respondents, when they are the most frequent, and they show the statements of young adults from children's homes like "the greatest joy for parents is when they can watch their child grow" and "the child always comes first for parents". They have attributed the highest importance to these statements. However, we also must not overlook the power of other statements, which the respondents deem to be relevant.

Table 1. The idea of a child for young adults from children's homes

Dictum / Response	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. when a person is a good parent, he can be totally satisfied in his life	**23**	47.92	9	18.75	10	20.83	3	6.25	3	6.25
2. home with the children is the only place where a person can feel completely happy and relaxed	**21**	43.75	8	16.67	9	18.75	4	8.33	6	12.50
3. a child is support, when a person feels alone	**24**	50.00	8	16.67	7	14.58	7	14.58	2	4.17
4. a child cements the family	**24**	50.00	11	22.92	10	20.83	2	4.17	1	2.08
5. a child represents too great a restriction on freedom*	9	18.75	12	25.00	**14**	29.17	5	10.42	8	16.67
6. for parents the greatest joy is when they can watch their child grow	**37**	77.08	5	10.42	5	10.42	0	0.00	1	2.08
7. I consider a child to be a necessary condition for the fulfilment of my life	**16**	33.33	14	29.17	6	12.50	3	6.25	9	18.75
8. parents forgive their children for everything	**15**	31.25	12	25.00	10	20.83	5	10.42	6	12.50
9. the child always comes first for parents	**32**	66.67	9	18.75	4	8.33	2	4.17	1	2.08
10. I will give my child everything that I was missing during my childhood	15	31.25	**26**	54.17	4	8.33	0	0.00	3	6.25

* inverted rating, Bold = denotes the maximum number of recurring values – the mode

- A home with children is the only place where a person can feel completely happy and relaxed
- when a person is a good parent, he can be totally satisfied in his life
- a child is support, when one feels alone
- a child cements the family.

As our results later revealed, since it concerns children, who had a minimal experience with a functioning family atmosphere, the achieved values are interesting for us and it is important to ask what has affected young adults from children's homes towards such testimonies. In Slovakia, a number of studies have been implemented, which have dealt with issues concerning factors that affect the later parenthood of young adults. Above all, we would like to mention the research *Faktory ovplyvňujúce rodičovstvo mladých ľudí po ukončení ústavnej starostlivosti (Factors affecting the parenthood of young people after leaving institutional care)* (Bezáková 2013), which is focusing on identifying factors, which have somehow affected the parenthood of those people, who spent some time in the past within institutional care - in children's homes, focusing on the factors that help or hinder the role of parenting. The author has chosen a qualitative research, in which she has used the method of a narrative interview, a semantic selection test and the range of resilience. A qualitative data analysis was conducted using the method of grounded theory. The aforementioned

research sample consisted of 12 respondents from 25 to 36 years old, who had been placed in a children's home. The author has created 9 categories through open coding.

The first category was the *meaning of a parental role*. This category showed that the majority of respondents perceive parenthood like a gift for themselves, and they discovered themselves there and found out that being a parent is also an extreme responsibility and they feel that they must protect their child. Some respondents did not say anything about this category, because they themselves have a feeling that someone should care for them, that they need protection and do not feel sufficiently responsible for their children.

The second category was the *encroachment of the child into their life*. In this category, the respondents have said that children are the motivation and purpose of their lives and that it is precisely because of the child that they have changed their lifestyle, whether for better or worse. They stated that in the children they have found motivation, but some of them only think of their own needs. Among some respondents, the encroachment of the child in their life also meant that they have now realised the absence of parents in their lives.

Another category was *difficulties associated with the upbringing and care of the child*. In this category, the author found codes such as a lack of knowledge and skills, a lack of security, consistency and patience and the loss and abandonment of a child. Each one of the respondents found themselves in a different situation. Some parents are aware of their difficulties, with respect to the upbringing and care and, as the reason, they report that this is the way they have seen it in the children's home and they remember it. Others have lost their children, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, or they have left their family. Anyway, the author states that all parents have an interest in caring for their children and now they would like to at least meet with them and stay in touch.

The fourth category was *relationships*, which the author describes as the most fundamental category. She thought that the most relevant for the parents will be whether they are financial secured and have secured housing. It is true that the respondents mentioned these factors, but they also described that the relationship with the child is most important for them, because the child is their immediate family. She also states that these relationships have a huge impact on how they fulfil their parental role.

The fifth category, *pregnancy and the conception of a child*, spoke about what the parenthood of the respondents was influenced by. Crucial was the fact of whether their pregnancy was planned or unplanned. Seven mothers did not plan their pregnancy; the other five planned it. The majority of mothers who planned for a child, had a long-term relationship. The majority of those who did not plan the pregnancy, do not live with the child's biological father, some thought about an abortion and do not look after their first-born child. The next category was devoted to the topic of housing. In this category, the author found out that most mothers are constantly facing problems with *housing* – they alternate between sublets, crisis centres and so on. For the respondents, the support of a partner in the financing or the provision of accommodation was important.

The author called the seventh category, *support and helping factors*. Some respondents were lucky and their contact with the family in the past helped them towards the fact that they take their parental role responsibly and they are sure of themselves that they can manage it. Other respondents have found assistance with upbringing through education. In this way, they acquire their own values, which have been lost; some even found support in their partner, or in friends, whom they call their newly built family. Unfortunately, among the respondents there are such parents, who

do not have such support and are alone. In this case, they are turning to non-profit organisations and administrations from which they expect such assistance.

The penultimate category is focused on identifying *obstacles and suffering*. As the suffering and obstacles that the respondents encounter the most, the author cited - that the father of the child is not interested in the child, that he is aggressive, that he is a drug addict or that he does not even know about the child. Other factors that affect their parenthood and are obstacles for them are sickness, loneliness, fear and unemployment.

The final category was the *impact of life in a children's home on the future*. This category is very important, because the respondents have been greatly influenced precisely by the fact that the children's home was part of them and here they learned different models of behaviour, which affects their parenthood. This category is divided into subcategories. The first is what contact the respondents had with their family and why they were placed in a children's home. The most frequent responses are divided into subgroups, and thus the respondents that said that they were unwanted or they are not familiar with the reason for the placement, and some had regular contact with the family, others irregular, or even none. The second subcategory is how they perceived their educators/carers. In some cases, the respondents met with kind educators, some identified educators as a substitute for their parents, but among the answers were also those who identified educators as a source of violence, mistrust, prohibition and indifference. Furthermore, to this subcategory also belongs the period when the respondents left the institutional care, where and in what state they have left.

In the context of our research, we were interested in the idea of young adults from complete families and about the relationship towards the child in the family; the results are shown on next page in Table 2.

As we can see, we have found some parallels in the evaluation of young adults from complete families and young adults from children's homes. However, it is surprising that children from complete families do not see a child in the family so clearly positively as children from children's homes.

We have talked about the socialisation of the child in a family and in a substitute family environment. Theoretically, we pointed out that a child, who lacks a positive parental role model might, in the future, have distorted ideas about his future parenting or about a child. We have, therefore, decided to investigate the correlation of the ideas of young adults from children's homes with the length of stay of young adults in the children's homes. We discovered that the average length of time spent in a children's home for young adults, in our research, was 11.12 years, the mode = 16. The positive correlation is, in the aforementioned dicta, the smallest value of 0.71, which, however, indicates a significant relationship between the idea of a child and the length of stay in a children's home.

The process of preparation for parenthood is influenced by the family and the family environment or by a substitute family environment, the school environment and the whole of society, within which the child grows up. As we have already mentioned, when we addressed the socialisation of the child, during adolescence, the child takes over certain behaviour patterns of the parents towards each other and towards him as a child. Based on this adopted behaviour, the child in adulthood, as a parent, is largely influenced by his parents. Children who do not grow up with their parents, nor other adults who have them in direct care, but lived in a children's home, miss the parental patterns of behaviour. Our assertion relies also on the authors Matějček et al (1996)

Table 2. The idea of a child for young adults from complete families and correlations between the length of stay in a children's home and the idea of a child as well as correlations between the idea of a child and the relationship with the mother for young adults from children's homes

Dictum / Response	1		2		3		4		5		Length of time	Relationship
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1. when a person is a good parent, he can be totally satisfied in his life	16	33.33	**21**	43.75	6	12.50	3	6.25	2	4.16	-0.13	-0.52
2. home with the children is the only place where a person can feel completely happy and relaxed	14	29.17	**16**	33.33	5	10.42	7	14.58	6	12.50	-0.52	0.86
3. a child is support, when a person feels alone	15	31.25	**18**	37.50	6	12.50	6	12.50	3	6.25	0.85	0.81
4. a child cements the family	**29**	60.41	10	20.83	6	12.50	3	6.25	0	0,00	0.80	0.89
5. a child represents too great a restriction on freedom*	6	12.50	**24**	50.00	6	12.50	8	16.66	4	8.33	0.89	0.73
6. for parents the greatest joy is when they can watch their child grow	**31**	64.58	12	25.00	4	8.33	1	2.08	0	0,00	0.73	0.74
7. I consider a child to be a necessary condition for the fulfilment of my life	**19**	39.58	12	25.00	9	18.75	6	12.50	2	4.16	0.74	0.87
8. parents forgive their children for everything	12	25.00	**16**	33.33	5	10.42	10	20.83	5	10.42	0.87	0.71
9. the child always comes first for parents	**26**	54.17	16	33.33	3	6.25	3	6.25	0	0.00	0.71	0.03
10. I will give my child everything that I was missing during my childhood	10	20.83	**33**	68.75	4	8.33	0	0.00	1	2.08	0.03	-0.69

* inverted rating, Bold = denotes the maximum number of recurring values – the mode

and Oakley (2000), which is cited by Vágnerová (2008). They claim that the need to start a family is significantly influenced by experiences from childhood, how they perceived the potential burden of maternity and the parental role, how their parents coped and what kind of experience they had with their behaviour towards him as their child. The daughters of mothers who did not handle a motherly role, feel less confident and successful in a maternal role, or do not accept parenthood

at all. If the model of the parents represents already for an adult person, a positive role model, the parental role is perceived positively and the person knows how to behave as a parent, without fear that he will fail. Otherwise, if the parental role model was perceived negatively, there is a higher probability of an attitude of rejection towards becoming a parent.

"Much research has shown that what adversely affected the children in their emotional and social development, were not the conflicts between the parents as such, but, how they have taken shape and how they were addressed. The key question is whether the conflict between the parents does not disturb the basic emotional security of the child" (Lacinová & Škrdlíková 2008, 92). The child has the opportunity to watch the parents resolve conflict, consensus and reconciliation.

We have already mentioned the attachment bond, which arises most often between the mother and the child already in the prenatal period and develops during breastfeeding and the development of the child. We have talked about what impact an unstable and disrupted attachment bond might have on the life of the child throughout the life, such as the failure to establish social contacts, a problem with the expression of love, etc. Through linear correlation, we discover whether there is a relationship between the idea of a child for young adults from children's homes and their relationship, which they nourished towards their mother.

In this context, we are also interested as to whether the correlation will be identical with the correlation between the relationship towards the father. That is why we investigated whether there is a relationship between the idea of a child for young adults from children's homes and their relationship towards the father. We also compared the correlation of the relationship towards the mother and towards the father for young adults from children's homes and also towards the mother and towards the father for young adults from complete families. The idea of a child and the relationship towards the mother for young adults from children's homes of 0.44 and towards the father of 0.41, mostly correlates. Correlations for young adults from complete families are smaller, the relationship towards the father is 0.36 and the smallest value of the correlation related to the mother is 0.01.

The idea of a child for young adults may be subject also to the relationship towards the person, who is considered as the closest. Within the research, we were also interested in who is considered as the closest person to young adults from a children's home and from a complete family. Young adults from children's homes considered the closest person - the attachment person, in 31.03% of cases, is a sibling, which testifies about the strong sibling relationships, the so-called sibling attachment bond. Young adults from complete families consider the closest person, in 54.17% of cases, to be their mother, which confirms the theory of attachment bond between the mother and the child. While in young adults from children's homes, there are not significant differences with the perceptions of the mother and the father, for young adults from complete families, we found a significant difference.

In connection with the first area "the idea of a child", we also investigated the idea of when young adults want to have children and what they think is the optimal age for a man and a woman to become parents. The optimal age for a woman to become a mother was considered by young adults from children's homes as up to 25 years (47.92%), and by young adults from complete families as up to 30 years (70.83%). The optimal age for a man to become a father was considered by young adults from children's homes as up to 30 years (54.17%), the same as for young adults from complete families (52.08%).

When we were investigating as to when the young adults want to become parents, we discovered that the idea of the optimal age when a man and a woman are supposed to become parents, tallies

with their own views on the time when they want to become parents. Young adults from children's homes and complete families considered the optimal age to become parents to be from 26 to 30 years. Interesting, is the fact that 29.17% of young adults from children's homes have, up until now, not considered when they want to have children. For young adults from complete families, this idea is clearer, 10.42% have not considered about when they want to have children. Those that do not want to have children resulted in 6.25% of young adults from children's home and 2.08% of young adults from complete families.

CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH THE IDEA OF PARENTING

Žarnay (2009) conducted research where he investigated inter alia, also the concerns of boys from children's homes, dysfunctional families and functional families. He discovered that young boys from children's homes have the least fear about the upbringing of their own children and their health. Young boys from children's homes considered housing as their highest concern, where young boys from functional families considered finances as their highest concern. We wondered, which concerns were considered as the largest and the smallest by young adults from children's homes and complete families at present.

We found that the young adults from children's homes (65%) and the young adults from complete families (33.33%) are most concerned about financial problems. As the second greatest concern stated by a group of young adults from children's homes, in 11.94% of cases, was that they will turn out the same as their mother/father. Second in order for young adults from complete families, was the concern about their bad qualities and addictions. It is interesting to note that whilst 1.48% of young adults from children's home are concerned that they do not have anyone who will help them, young adults from complete families are more concerned by this worry, specifically 4.17%. The biggest difference in the responses among young adults from children's homes and complete families, was with concerns about commitment and responsibility. The smallest difference in the responses was about the concern of a lack of time for their interests.

In identifying concerns in connection with the idea of parenting, we have conceived questions in a different way and we wonder what young adults are concerned about and conversely what they look forward to. A group of young adult respondents from children's homes, in 58% of cases, are looking forward to their children, in 68% of cases, to marriage, in 64% of cases, to work and in 66% of cases to managing their own households. The only area, which the majority of respondents in the group considered to be a concern, is the area of – independent living and independence, which thus selected 54%. In the second group of respondents, who were young adults from complete families, there is no area considered to be of concern. 77% of respondents are looking forward to their future children, 75% to marriage, 70% to work, 79% to the running of their own households and 81% to an independent life and independence. It is interesting to note that while independent life and independence has been considered the greatest concern in young adults from children's homes, among young adults from complete families it is considered to be the smallest concern.

By merging the findings from the last two tables, we understand in young adults from children's homes, the areas of concern as – an independent life and independence, in relation to fear of financial problems. In young adults from complete families, we understand the areas of concerns as – work in connection with financial problems.

Table 3. Comparison of the areas of concern in relation to their idea of parenting

Area	Young adults from a children's home		Young adults from a complete family	
	I am looking forward to	I am concerned	I am looking forward to	I am concerned
Children	58%	38%	77%	23%
Marriage	68%	28%	75%	25%
Work	64%	32%	70%	**30%**
Own household	66%	30%	79%	21%
Independent life and independence	42%	**54%**	81%	19%

Bold = denotes the maximum value from the group of numbers for concern

PARENTING SKILLS AND QUALITIES OF YOUNG ADULTS

We have already dealt with the socialisation of the child within the family environment. Social learning and the imitation by a child takes on certain forms of behaviour, a continually perceived parental role model and he is preparing for it during his adolescence. Therefore, when we examine the idea of parenting for young adults from children's homes, we wonder whether there is a significant difference between the parenting skills and qualities of young adults from complete families and children's homes. Furthermore, we observed the parenting skills and qualities of young adults from children's homes. However, it is important to note that this area of our research is conditioned by the self-esteem and self-confidence of the respondents themselves.

For the most developed skills/qualities in themselves, young adults from children's homes consider fairness and independence. This finding is interesting, given that in the previous area we have found that it was independent life and independence that is the only area most young adults from children's homes consider to be a concern. Less confident are they in the ability to resolve problems peacefully and at least in addressing official matters.

Of course, we were also interested in a self-assessment of the skills of the young adults from complete families, in relation to their future parenting skills.

Most young adults from complete families identified that they solve problems with discretion, 58% of cases, furthermore, that they are patient, 52% of cases, and reliable 46% of cases. 38% of respondents said that as the least developed qualities, they considered cooking, dealing with official matters and flexibility.

The following table 4 compares the modes for individual skills/qualities. The arithmetic average of the modes for young adults from children's homes, is 1.22, and for young adults from complete families, is 1.90. It follows that, despite the fact that young adults from children's homes do not grow up in a natural family environment, they do not show significant differences compared to young adults who grew up in complete families. On the contrary, we have found that young adults from children's homes have more developed parenting skills and qualities, compared to young adults from complete families. They have more developed qualities/skills in cooking, the proficiency to deal with official matters, fairness, flexibility, patience and reliability.

Table 4. Parental skills and qualities of young adults from children's homes and comparison of modes, parenting skills and qualities

Parental skills/qualities	1		2		3		4		5		Young adults from a children's home	Young adults from a complete family
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Mode	
1. I know how to cook	19	**38**	16	32	6	12	1	2	6	12	1	2
2. I know how to sensibly manage money	19	**38**	15	30	8	16	3	3	3	6	2	2
3. I am adept at dealing with official matters	12	24	13	**26**	10	20	8	16	5	10	1	2
4. I am independent	21	**42**	13	26	6	12	3	6	5	10	1	1.2
5. I am fair	21	**42**	17	34	8	16	0	0	2	4	1	2
6. I solve problems calmly and with discretion	10	20	15	**30**	12	24	5	10	6	12	2	2
7. I know how to quickly adapt	19	**38**	15	30	10	20	2	4	2	4	1	2
8. I am patient	15	**30**	10	20	8	16	8	16	7	14	1	2
9. I am reliable	20	**40**	11	22	11	22	4	8	2	4	1	2

Bold = indicates the maximum number of recurring values – the mode

When we investigated whether young adults from complete families have more developed parenting skills and qualities than the young adults from children's homes, we wondered whether there is a relationship between these skills and qualities and the length of time spent in children's homes. That is why, in the questionnaire, we firstly determine the average length of stay of young adults in children's homes. The average length of time spent in a children's home for young adults, at the time of the research, was 11.12 years, the mode = 16.

We were also interested in the relationship between the length of time young adults have been in a children's home and their positive self-assessment, in the context of parenting and the skills associated with it. Here once again we return to the other area "concerns relating to the idea of parenthood", where the largest proportion of young adults from children's homes identified a concern with financial problems (65%). The longer a child is in a children's home, so his ability for money management weakens. The second largest correlation value is for "I am fair", followed by "I solve problems calmly and with discretion". 0.79 is the value of correlation for parental skills or for the qualities "I am independent". The independence of young adults from children's homes is influenced by the length of stay in a children's home.

PROMISCUITY OF YOUNG ADULTS

With the idea of parenting, a person naturally associates a child and a partner, with whom the child was conceived and with whom the child is brought up. The absence of an attachment bond,

which we mention in the monograph, may also cause an inability to establish social contacts – relationships. Žarnay (2009) indicates that even if it is not provable, young adults from children's homes have a greater propensity to homosexuality, which may be due to the lack of a role model parent and their love. From the testimony of young adults from the children's homes, we discovered that an inclination towards women does not have a purely sexual character. With regards to women, especially older women, they appreciate their care, tenderness, caresses, thus those qualities, as well as behaviour, which are identical to motherly behaviour. Selecting a partner of the same sex is thus a conscious decision of not having their own child. That is why we focused one area of our research on the promiscuity of young adults from children's homes, to determine their ideas of a relationship and to review their current status in the area of relationships. The idea of a relationship for young adults from children's homes, we also compared to the idea of a relationship for young adults from complete families.

Papšo (2011) conducted research where he investigated the effect of living in children's homes on the social adaptation of the young adults after the end of the substitute care. Among other indicators, his research focused on parental competence and partner relationships. The research sample consisted of 103 young adults, who grew up in a children's home, and their average age was 23.28 years. Papšo discovered that 12.64% of young adults have had 4 relationships, 25.26% have had 5 relationships in the past and 53.68% of young adults have had more than 5 relationships.

Does the idea of young adults from children's homes about fidelity in a relationship differ to young adults from complete families? With the dictum "I believe in the strength of marriage", 45.83% agreed with it and 14.58% disagreed. The dictum "I prefer alternating partners before marriage", we evaluated diversely, therefore 54.17% of respondents do not prefer and 6.25% of respondents do prefer, alternating partners. With the final dictum "I will be faithful forever to the father/mother of my children" was agreed by most, 62.50% of respondents, while 10.42% did not agree.

Similarly to the previous investigation of young adults from children's homes, also the young adults from complete families prefer marriage and fidelity more than the alternating of partners, in all three dicta. Specifically, 45.83% of young adults from complete families have a belief in the strengths of marriage (they marked answer 1 – I agree), 35.42% prefer an alternation of partners more than marriage, and 45.83% are planning to be faithful to the father/mother of their children.

Through a comparison of the results about the idea of fidelity in a relationship, we discovered that there is not a significant difference between the responses of young adults from children's homes and young adults from complete families. Young adults from children's homes and from complete families agree with all the statements equally.

We also investigated the current partnership relationships of young adults from children's homes, i.e. at the time when the research was conducted. We found that at the time of the research, 47.92% of the respondents were in a relationship, i.e. had a boyfriend/girlfriend and 52.08% were not in a relationship.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We have based it on the assumption that the idea of parenting for young adults is influenced already from the prenatal period, where an attachment bond arises between the mother and the child, through socialisation itself and the environment in which the child grows up, and also through a fulfilling of the children's needs. To find out any differences about the idea of

parenthood, we compared selected result findings from young adults from children's homes, with the research result findings for young adults from complete families. In this chapter, we present those research findings of the available studies, which we also examined, through which we are bringing updated findings:

1. Rabušic (2000 In Vágnerová 2008), in his research, discovered a shift in the views of young people on the value of a child. He found out that young people no longer consider a child as a necessary condition for the fulfilment of life.

   We verified the dictum "*a child shall be considered a necessary condition for the fulfilment of my life.*" in both examined groups of respondents, surveyed through scalability questions. Subsequently, we added up the responses I agree and I somewhat agree, and the responses I disagree and I somewhat disagree. The response I do not know we did not add up. We found that 62.5% of young adults from children's homes, deemed the child to be a necessary condition for the fulfilment of their lives. 25% of respondents disagreed with the statement. The findings were very similar to young adults from complete families. 64.58% consider the child as a necessary condition for the fulfilment of their lives, 16.66% do not. Based on our findings, we conclude that the research findings of Rabušic, from 2000, are no longer current. An average of 63.54% of young adults from children's homes and complete families considered the child as a necessary condition for the fulfilment of their lives.

2. Hamplová (2000 In Vágnerová 2008), in his research, found that 30% of young people have agreed with the assertions: "*The child represents too great a restriction on freedom.*" And at the same time "*For the parents, the greatest joy is that they can watch their child grow*".

   We examined the dicta, summed up the responses "I agree" and "I somewhat agree" and discovered that the child constitutes too big a restriction on the freedom of 27.09% of young adults from children's homes and for 24.99% of young adults from complete families. Based on our findings, we conclude that the research findings of Hamplová, from 2000, does not differ significantly, on average 26.04% of young adults considered the child as a restriction of freedom. 87.5% of young adults from children's homes and 89.58% of young adults from complete families, agreed with the dictum that for a parent the greatest joy is to see their child grow up. An average of 57.81% of young adults agree with the assertion that for a parent the greatest joy is when you can see your child grow, which is a marked difference from the research findings of Hamplová.

3. Žarnay (2009) discovered that young boys from children's homes are most concerned about housing and young boys from functional families are most concerned about finances.

   In our research, we investigated the concerns of young men and women. We found out that both the research samples of respondents considered the greatest concern to be finances, in connection with the idea of parenting (average of 40%). We also examined more specific concerns and found that financial concerns are for young adults from children's homes associated with independent living and independence (54%) and with work for young adults from complete families (30%). It is interesting to note that concern about an independent life and independence was classified as the greatest concern for young adults from children's homes and as the smallest concern in young adults from complete families.

4. Papšo (2011) found that 91.58% of young adults had more than 4 relationships. Papšo examined 103 young adults, who lived in children's homes.

   In our research, we examined approximately half the number of the respondents compared to Papšo. We found that 43.75% of young adults had more than 4 relationships, which is less than half than Papšo's resulting data research. The distinctive difference, we can attribute to the average age of the respondents, which was 23.28 in Papšo's research and 19.64 years in ours. We conclude that the number of relationships proportionally grow with the increasing age of the young adults. This conclusion is, however, questionable. Summing up the responses "I agree" and "I somewhat agree", we found that 64.58% of respondents believe in the strength of marriage, 75% of respondents do not prefer an alternation of partners before marriage and 70.83% of respondents plan to be faithful to the father/mother of their children.

5. Vágnerová (2008) states the research findings of a number of authors from 2000–2003. They state that the most optimal age for the procreation of the first child is 24.5 for women and 28 for men.

   In our research, we confirm the statistical information about the growing age of first-time mothers, because we found that respondents considered the most optimal age for procreation of the first child to be from 26 to 30 years. They themselves want to become parents between the age of 26 to 30.

It is also worth mentioning the new findings or findings that require enlightenment, which we arrived at in the research and which we have analysed: Young adults from children's homes consider as the closest person a sibling, followed by a friend and a social worker. The least amount of young adults from complete families consider the father as the closest person, while before the father, young adults from complete families, prefer a sibling, a friend, boyfriend/girlfriend and the mother. The idea of a child for young adults from complete families is worse than the idea of a child for young adults from children's homes. In seven out of ten dicta from the area of the "idea of a child", we indicated a positive correlation to the relationship of the respondents towards their mother. In seven out of ten dicta from the area of the "idea of a child", we indicated a positive correlation to the length of time spent in a children's home. The idea of fidelity in a relationship is more positive for young adults from complete families. Young adults from children's homes consider independence as their most developed quality, while at the same time, especially independent life and independence are stated as their greatest concerns. A relationship exists between the developing of parenting skills and the qualities and the length of time spent in a children's home. There does not exist a relationship between the idea of fidelity in a relationship and whether the young adult is currently in a relationship.

Based on an analysis of the studied themes, we have proposed the following recommendations for practice:

1. We also continue to work on improving the relationship between children in children's homes and the biological parents.

2. We make sure that every child should have in the children's home at least one attachment person.

3. We make sure that every child in a children's home is every day in the constant presence of an older man and woman, who should somehow replace the positive role model of the father and mother.

4. To work systematically to develop the independence of children from children's homes, already since childhood, to take responsibility for their lives.

5. To prepare children from children's homes for partner relationships between a man and a woman, by developing (also) their social skills. Ensure that children in children's homes had in their vicinity the sight of a harmonious partnership relationship (ideally a marital one).

6. Systematically preparing children in children's homes for parenting (e.g. caring for pets), to develop parenting skills and qualities, to know the responsibilities and the role of parents and the mission of parenting.

7. Ensure contact of young adults with young children and learn about child care.

8. Promote and deepen the confession of faith, which is associated with self-respect, respect for others, the opposite sex, fidelity, etc.

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Gabriela Matczak

Parental Attitudes in the Opinions of Children Placed in an Educational Care Centre

INTRODUCTION

Discussion on parental attitudes in the opinions of children placed in an educational care centre requires presenting and introducing a basic conceptual apparatus. Numerous representatives of social science, pedagogues, psychologists as well as sociologists take a great interest in how the children of educational care centres function. Continual deliberations and analyses lead to the creation of regularities which established the theoretical function of issues being discussed. Owning to diversity, variability as well as the wide spectrum of conditioning and factors determining social mechanisms, researchers are given new opportunities for exploration. My motivation for looking at this topic was everyday observation of social reality as well as a great deal of truisms and stereotypes of children in care as socially maladjusted children coming from dysfunctional families living on the margins of society. In a sense this stereotype deeply ingrained in society members builds a paradigm of treating children in care as inferior. It should be also noted that swifts having occurred over the last years in social science are a powerful incentive to change this negative approach.

The decision to place a child in an educational care centre is affected by numerous factors and circumstances. Each child in care has their own background, biography and, essentially, a relationship with their parents. It would appear obvious that children of educational care centres may have a hostile attitude towards their mothers or fathers and their childhood memories may be a mixture of sadness and sorrow. How does the reality look like? Does placing a children in a children's home determine their attitude towards their parents? People from the very first moment of their life are shaped by their environment which is naturally created by their parents. Social adjustment consists in forming certain attitudes, habits and norms. We receive this starter pack of abilities and competences from our parents by means of primary socialisation. Children and their parents may be considered as close-coupled elements filled with emotions. Family may be perceived as a first and vital step in the social development.

The aim of the article is to present the current condition of the foster care institution in Poland and present the results of research about perception of parental attitudes in care and foster children. The article is divided into three parts: a discussion of the family as a basic social unit, presentation of the system of foster care in Poland, with a focus on children's home and, consequently, analysis of the results of research carried out one of the Polish children home. According to the statistics brought by the Central Statistical Office Statistical Yearbook (2015, 32) at the end of 2014, in Poland was 1,059 care facilities.

At the end of the article conclusions were formulated, as well as problem areas that emerged in the course of the study.

FAMILY AS THE BASIC UNIT OF SOCIETY

Although literature provide us with various interpretation of the notion of family, researchers agree that family is the basic unit of society and the foundation of social life. A lack of terminology unification is caused by the uniqueness of family. In the clear and synthetic way, Okoń (2007, 355) defines family as a group consisting of parents, children and relatives. One of the salient traits which distinguishes family from other social groups are relationships and ties between the family members. According to Dyczewski's concept (2003, 9) family is the primal crucial community during every stage of life.

Adamski claims that "family is the spiritual unity of a narrow circle of people who are gathered at home thanks to reciprocal acts of assistance and care as well as based on belief in a true or alleged biological connection as well as the social and family tradition" (Adamski 2002, 29). Mekiello-Jarza (1998, 735–737) analyses a definition of family seen from a psychological point of view. Analysing terminological interpretation of family encountered in literature, the author pointed out the fixed element of each definition. A majority of people associate family with a group of people connected by blood ties and living under the same roof. The reality of 21st century creates an entirely different picture of family. This notion shall be discussed in a broad sense. These days, owing to changes in society, economy and politics, it is acceptable to define unrelated people, mainly foster parents raising adopted children, as family. Strong emotional bonds reduce biological connections. In a majority of people the word family evokes positive associations which refer to love, support, tolerance and a blithe childhood.

FAMILY'S FUNCTIONS

As put forward by Korzeniowska and Szuscik (2006, 330) family, as a necessary element of the sustainable human development, should fulfil its functions. Human life is focused on various functions and activities by means of which family attains their objectives and enables its members to obtain their undertakings. These objectives are richly varied and their honest and conscientious accomplishment helps achieve the perfect family picture.

Adamski (2003) distinguished two functions of family: institutional and personal. The former, which focuses on family and marriage as institution, can be divided into procreational, economic, protective, integrative and pedagogical functions. The latter refers to family as a social group of a primary and personal nature which should provide its members with emotional stability. Personal functions comprise marital, parental and brotherly functions. It should be added that proper functioning of family, emotional stability as well as the sense of security exert a considerable impact on functioning in adulthood. Researchers emphasise that family serves a significant role in compensating negative feelings experienced beyond domesticity. The only viable solution to reduce psychological pain caused by the contemporary world, which is unremittingly changing and posing new challenges, is home.

To sum up, family plays a crucial role in human life. When born people are so vulnerable that they require constant care we would not be able to survive without. This strong emotional bond between parents and children builds children's self-esteem, its behaviour, activities, involvement and attitude. Positive experiences and patterns of behaviour enable to start balanced adult life. However it should be noted, that inappropriate family functioning results in long-term consequences of reaching every areas of human life.

PARENTAL ATTITUDES – TERMINOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

In social science parental attitudes are understood in various ways. Makiello-Jarza (1998, 737–739) points out that parental attitudes are an integrated set of behaviours towards the child, internalized throughout life and shown in ontogenetic behaviour of an individual. Specificity of parental attitudes should be considered in terms of the personal background. As stated by the author, parental attitudes are shaped in three stages. The first one begins during the early childhood, when patterns of behaviour are transmitted to children. At this stage a proper emotional connection between parents and their children is crucial. Negative parental attitudes and unpleasant childhood experiences may contribute to prejudice and unwillingness to become a mother or a father in the future. The first stage is closed-coupled with the second one which is closely related to pregnancy and waiting for a child's arrival. The situation of future parents depends on various factors such as the financial, social and family situation as well as physical condition. Childbirth closes the second stage of forming attitudes. In the cultural code all circumstances surrounding pregnancy and childbirth are strictly attributed to women. Dynamic changes occurring in society are exerting an impact on gender stereotypes. These days we are paying more attention to the connection between future parents, fathers accompany their partners during prenatal diagnosis and check-ups, and finally support them during delivery. Both parents take care of their children from the very first moment of their life. The last stage, estimated to occur in the first month of a child's life, is connected with adjusting to parenthood. During this short period of time the relationship between parents and their child frames.

Ziemska (1973, 32) considers a parental attitude as a tendency to behave in a certain way, which consists of three cohesive elements: thought, action and emotion. Beliefs, thoughts, actions, behaviour as well as emotions determine the way in which parental attitudes are shaped. Moreover, Ziemska points out that parental attitudes are dynamic and variable; they change according to child's age and experiences.
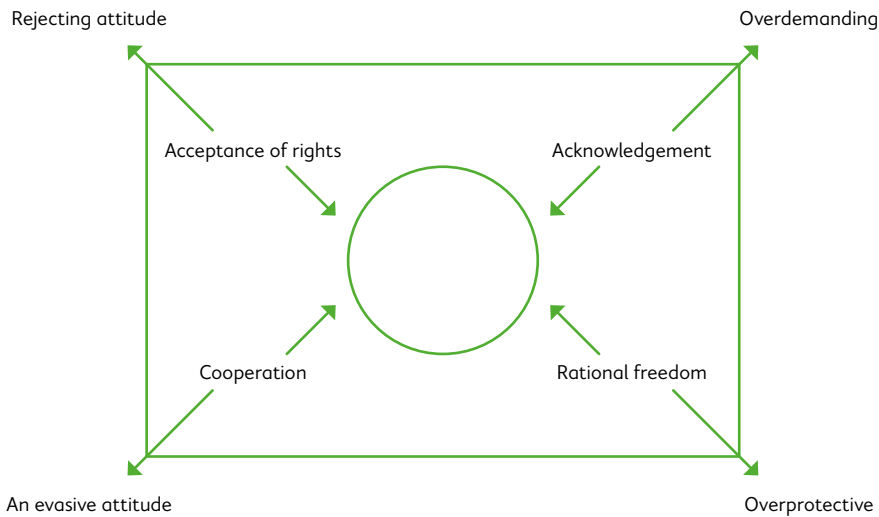
THE TYPOLOGY OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES

Diversity and character of parental attitudes towards their children prompted researchers to categorize attitudes as either positive or negative. In the Polish research area the most distinguished representatives are Maria Ziemska and Mieczyslaw Plopa, both of whom worked on parental attitudes as well as phenomena and changes occurring in family. Ziemska's typology is based on the considerable academic achievement. The author proposed a diagram (Figure 1) including completely opposite parental attitudes.

Positive attitudes are taken in favour of children; decision concerning their child made by parents are thoughtful and aimed at child welfare. The starting point should be the total acceptance of children, their strengths and weaknesses. The feeling of being a worthy person makes you motivated and uplifted. Children who receive acceptance and respect from their parents believe in their abilities to discover and explore the world. Happiness derived from spending time together, willingness to follow your children's lead and accompanying in their development build a strong emotional connection, which enables to create the atmosphere full of love, trust and security. A necessary condition for the proper development of a person is the support of their activities from the very first moments of their life. It should be noted that parents who do not objectify their children, share passions, household chores and task with them. Even during some activities with parents, cooperation makes children more involved and teaches them fair play. Values passed by parents have a positive impact in adulthood since along with age role models, objectives and

Figure 1. Completely opposite parental attitudes. Source: Ziemska (1973, 60)

Rejecting attitude   Overdemanding

Acceptance of rights   Acknowledgement

Cooperation   Rational freedom

An evasive attitude   Overprotective

aspiration change. The positive parental attitude should comprise the element of rational freedom, especially in adolescence, when young people seek their identity. Raging hormones and a lot of questions without answers cause that children grow apart from their parents. Giving children some freedom allows them to pursue their passion, dreams and plans while trust developed from childhood provides both sides with the sense of security. Bans, unfair criticism and fear prevent a young person from discovering and exploring the world. Over the years truths passed by to parents serve as signposts for their children. The last element mentioned by Maria Ziemska is the acknowledgement, which is an indispensable part of the positive parental attitude. This feature displays in non-instrumental treatment of a child, setting reasonable expectations and duties as well as respecting their rights and opinion.

All decision should be made together in a way which is understandable and clear for each family member. Parents should teach their children responsible attitudes and indicate the proper way of behaviour before they start to require so. Attitudes described above show parent's care, trust as well as their attempt to meet age-appropriate needs. The strong parental relationship builds a positive image of themselves and family in young people. Except positive parental attitudes, negative ones adversely influencing child's functioning are distinguished. The first negative attitude is the rejection characterised by a lack of acceptance and, consequently, disappearance of the emotional connection. The relationship between a parent and a child is full of criticism, disappointment and anger. When talking to their child parents stuck in the rejecting attitude use short firm statements. A lack of positive emotions expressed towards children results in withdrawal and fear of beginning new relationships. Frequently, parents subconsciously address offensive remarks, unfair criticism and humiliating words to their child harmful for their proper development.

The next attitude is called evasive since it is characterized by indifference and excessive distance towards a child. Avoiding a children is the opposite of cooperation. Relationships between parents and their child are marked by indifference and a lack of interest. Parents frequently compensate for their negative attitude by means of gifts and the superficial satisfaction of child's needs. The opposite extreme is overprotection and excessive preoccupation with a child. The inconvertible and indissoluble relationship between parents and their child is built on the basis of dependence

and drilled powerlessness. Making decisions for your child, doing their household chores and homework for fear of their independence and possible mistakes lead to building the imaginary, uncritical world completely detached from reality. Such an attitude adopted by parents has severe consequences in adulthood when a person feels the strong need to be dependent on others. The last type of parental attitudes is marked by the focus on a child. It is displayed by domination, exercising power over a child and treating the relationship between a parent and a child authoritatively. By means of the over-demanding attitude children are forced to race with expectations set by their parents. The endless struggle to satisfy their demands may contribute to low self-esteem and lacking in confidence. Even in adulthood people, who grow up in such families, have the feeling of rejection and inferiority as well as an urge to constantly prove that they may, can and want. Authoritarianism, expressed by parents, limits child's freedom and independence. The phenomenon of child's over-stimulation can be frequently observed. Burden of numerous rapid changes in social expectations and the future labor market is imposed on parents. They claim that they register their children for developmentally inappropriate extra-curricular activities, which they do not have enough time for, in order to ensure a good future.

Noticeably, a cross section of parental attitudes is wide and the process of shaping the certain attitude is intricate and heavily dependent on various factors. When discussing issues concerning parental attitudes the typology proposed by Plopa (2008, 38) should be mentioned. The parental attitude's model presented by the author comprises fives dimension of parents' activities towards their children. As Maria Ziemska does, the author distinguished positive and negative attitudes. The former includes: the attitudes of acceptance and independence while the latter - the attitudes of rejection, inconsistency and over-demandingness. The juxtaposition of these two typologies clearly shows that they are identical and both authors perceive parental attitudes similarly.

To sum up, the vision of upbringing is the individual issue of each parent and parents' attitude towards their children is determined by various factors. However, it should be emphasized that in order to provide children with the proper development, parents should take into account positive parental attitudes which are full of love, acceptance, cooperation and respect. Unfortunately, the analysis the existing reality of upbringing clearly indicates that the relationship between parents and their child is dynamic and difficult. Additionally, it has an enormous impact on the way a person functions in adulthood. That is why I was inspired to address this issue which is difficult but simultaneously crucial for pedagogy and worthy of constant exploration.

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE ON ASSISTANCE

Assistance in the development of a child and the functioning of family should be orientated interdisciplinary. According to Marynowicz-Hetka (2010, 9–18), the notion of assistance has always existed in social pedagogy and owing to numerous studies it is still explored and deepened. Assistance should be oriented on social actions which involve an individual in social life. One of the forms of assistance in the development is social accompaniment. Faustier (2000) claims that the process of social exchange is significant and possible in several variations: commercial exchanges, exchange of contracts as well as by dedicating time, individuality, privacy and emotions, among others. Martynowicz-Hetka (2010) points out that the notion of development can be treated quantitatively (reflected by an increase) and qualitatively (based on refining the existing condition). All in all, the development can be presented as "a group of specifically situated activities, undertaken in the environment of an individual by a pedagogue, a social worker, a social pedagogue. They comprise socio-pedagogical activities, orientated towards supporting, enriching and, consequently, optimizing the individual development of an entity and their environment" (Marynowicz- Hetka 2010, 10).

Since the above mentioned article concerns experimental issues, it is worth presenting the concept of the development's danger threshold level, which is understood as the danger level accumulating the negative component of life. According to Marynowicz-Hetka (2010, 12–16) the concept of danger threshold is crucial from the perspective of diagnosis and practise, since it leaves a space for preventive and intervention activities. Recognition of the danger threshold is the starting point for action and estimation of potential consequences of further degradation in the person's environment. Taking into account the notions discussed above, orientated towards family in a difficult situation, several practices can be developed according to their final objectives. They can concern preventing and pre-empting exacerbation of the family situation. They are usually fulfilled during social accompaniment and the regular socio-pedagogical work with family members who require such support. It concerns children who, under the various circumstances, were separated from the family environment. When planning assistance for families in a difficult situation one should remember to protect child's potential and modify what does not pose danger. But, above all, not only should one not intervene but accompany and support. Accompanying family is an intricate process requiring numerous professional competences and a profound understanding of social issues from a social pedagogue.

Another crucial aspect of working with families and children-in-care is caring and maintaining the relationship between children and their families as well as seeking solutions and ways which enables their return to their families. The overriding objective of performed activities should be prevention or, at least, minimization of the potential appearance of the socio-cultural reproduction mechanism. It is based on the assumption that children raised in socially excluded or in danger of being socially excluded environments will follow socio-cultural patterns of their parents in the future (Bourdieu 1990, 57). Working with children, who were excluded from families and placed in an educational care centre, is the intricate process depended on numerous predictors. Steps taken by pedagogues should be thoughtful, planned and non-intrusive. The foundation is to focus on children's strengths, and thus, to create reality in which they can fulfil themselves and realize their untapped potential. Marynowicz-Hetka (2010, 17) mentions dilemmas concerning steps towards their support. One should remember that the assistance offered by the social workers should not be marked by social stigma and stereotypes showing person's helplessness and vulnerability. Families in a difficult condition may consider such situation as a confirmation of their defeat and life's failures. Social changes as well as defense mechanisms developed by children-in-care force the modification of social support, which is seen e.g. in replacing such terms as "support" or "assistance" with "social accompaniment", which is not so stigmatizing.

The situation of children-in-care is extremely difficult since they were excluded from their natural family and included in the artificially created environment. Coping with completely new circumstances requires time but, most of all, shrewd and reasonable steps taken by representatives of social science.

A CHILDREN'S HOME AS AN INSTITUTION

The next vital component of a presented topic are educational care centres whose role is to take care of children and teenagers deprived of parental care. As claimed by Borowski (2001, 59) educational care centres are the organizational entities of social service. The mission of these facilities is taking care of and raising children and adolescents who are partly or fully devoid of parental care as well as of socially maladjusted children. The key element of this definition is the focus on supporting parents in upbringing their children instead of isolating them and depriving of any contact. In the Statistical Yearbook compiled by the Office of Weights and Measures the following

terminological explanation can be found: "An educational care centre provides a child, who is fully or partly deprived of parental care, with full-time or periodic care and rearing. Moreover, it satisfies their basic needs, especially emotional, development, housing, social, spiritual, among others. It also guarantees health benefits and education due to the separate regulation. A director is in charge of a children's home" (2015, 22).

TYPOLOGY OF EDUCATIONAL CARE CENTRES

As stated in the Statistical Yearbook (2015, 23), five types of educational care centres according to undertaken tasks can be distinguished. It is a socialization centre providing round-the clock care that are mostly associated with having custody of children. Their role is to implement the programme developed beforehand and aimed at helping children and families. The objective of all activities concerning children-in-care is to maintain contact with relatives and enable their return to their biological family. Another type of facilities is an intervention centre which provides temporary care during the critical situation. The centre rears children of different ages. It provides many siblings with upbringing and care. The crucial condition for the functioning of the above mentioned centre is the number of children which does not exceed eight. The next type is a specialist therapy centre aimed at taking care of children having individual needs, mainly those having the certification of disability and requiring adjustment of working methods. In this centre children attend general educational, remedial, speech therapy and compensatory classes, among others. The last type is a centre combining tasks of the centres. Its objective is to provide care and rearing by means of implementing programmes of socialization, intervention and specialist therapy centres. From the perspective of the problem under study, it is a children's home that holds the special place among the educational care centres of a socialization type. According to Krajewska (2009, 76), they take full care of people aged 3–18 and deprived temporary or permanently of their natural family environment. In some exceptional cases a child in care can be a person up to 24 years old.

CAUSES FOR PLACING A CHILD IN A CHILDREN'S HOME

The spectrum of causes for placing a child in a children's home is wide. The most frequently mentioned are parent's inefficiency of the child-rearing methods, diseases, which prohibit them from taking care of their child, financial predicaments, substandard living conditions as well as various parent's dysfunctions and addictions or behaviours posing danger to a child. As the analysis of reasons of placing a child in a children's home implies that they are independent on a child, it is crucial to maintain a balance in the functioning of children and take care of their comfort. Okon (2004, 83) points out that the overriding concern of a children's home should be the attempt to replace the real home, provide children with the conditions needed to complete compulsory education and prepare them for an independent life.

CHILDREN'S HOME FUNCTIONS

A children's home should provide children and teenagers with a sense of security, respect and acceptance. Children are in the extremely difficult family situation, deprived of care, family warmth and home. That is why in this type of educational care centres one should pay attention to the sustainable development of children and their emotional needs whose satisfaction may compensate for family breakdown. An indispensable part of the functioning of a children's home

is dispensing an adequate standard of living, which includes food, appropriate clothing, school supplies and medical care. Kozdrowicz (1999, 60) claims that it fulfils pedagogical, caring, educational, cultural, corrective, integrative, reactive and health functions. However, educational care functions are the most important and they are performed by the all activities which are preventive and compensative as well as stimulating and supporting the holistic development of children. Although children's homes assume the exclusion of children from their natural families, they are aimed at keeping close contact between children and their relatives. Since the crucial aspect of life is the quality of the family relationships, pedagogues should not limit contact with relatives, unless the court has reached such a decision. Healthy relationships and contact with family develop the emotional sphere and create the hierarchy of values. It should be noted that a children's home is the specific educational environment. Its residents are children and teenagers in the complicated social, pedagogical and psychological situation. Each child has a different history full of painful experiences. Trying to deal with a difficult situation, many of them develop defense mechanisms such as rebellion, aggression, apathy and isolation. Children consider their stay in educational care centres aimed at socialization not as an opportunity but the unfair punishment. Children's homes gather various individuals and this situation requires the understanding of children's feelings and the attempt to uncover their potential. They provide children in care with an environment conducive to their physical, intellectual and emotional development. Studies and analyses of the reality compel staff in charge of facilities to constantly increase the quality of children's homes and tailor them for children's needs. It should be admitted that despite numerous attempts, it is not possible to reduce homesickness.

According to Badora (2006, 128), compensation for these deprivations is possible thanks to the structure of a children's home which is based on a proper cadre of tutors, pedagogues, psychologists and social workers. Education and experience are the key to cope with difficult situations. Another essential elements are rules, statutes and the organization of pedagogical groups, among which family, homogeneous, mixed, developmental groups as well as groups aimed at automatizing maturing children can be distinguished. In the Statistical Yearbook (2015, 32) detailed information gathered by the Central Statistical Office of Poland can be found. In 2014 19.2 thousand children resided in the institutional facilities which provides round-the clock foster care. In 2015 this number increased by 27.0 thousand. The number of children in the particular educational care centres looks as follows:

- family centre – 1.9 thousand. (2.1 thousand in a year),
- socialization centre – 13.0 thousand. (17.3 thousand in a year),
- intervention centre – 0.8 thousand, (2.2 thousand in a year),
- specialist therapy centre – 0.3 thousand. (0.3 thousand in a year),
- centre combining tasks of the centres – 3.1 thousand. (4.8 thousand in a year)

(Central statistical office. Social assistance, child, family services in 2014, statistical publishing establishment 2015, 32).

To continue the analysis of statistics included in the Statistical Yearbook (2015, 33), statistics concerning the age of children and teenagers residing in children's homes are worth mentioning. The youngest group comprised children up to 6 years old who constituted 11.6 % of all children placed in the socialization centres. However, the largest group formed children aged 14–17 which constituted 48.1 %. People over 18 years old made up 8.9 %. One of the stereotypes concerning causes for placing children in children's homes is the death of parents. However, the reality debunks this myth since only 2.6 % children of institutional centres are biological orphans while

17.8 % are half-orphans. To sum up, above presented findings show that four fifth of children in care have both parents who, for a variety of reasons, were unable to take care of their children.

CONDITION OF FOSTER CARE IN POLAND

The recapitulation of the discussion on educational care centres encourages reflection upon the complexity of the whole process which is composed by the functioning and the structure of children's homes, organization, the system of managing children and teenagers and lastly the cooperation between experts and children' families. The categories of educational care centres should be treated in the broad and interdisciplinary way. Although the statistics show increasingly greater efficiency of facilities which provide full-time foster care, in terms of the qualitative research they do not fulfil some of their obligations. Over the last few years the mechanism of de-institutionalisation of educational care centres can be observed. Big children's homes are converting into small groups of several people which resemble families. Such solutions are dictated by needs of the social area. Smaller groups facilitate contact between children-in-care and enable to create their own intimate space while doing household chores together teaches responsibility and positive habits. The exploration and modification of these issues exert effects visible in the social area. It should be noted that children's homes have various duties to fulfil but the most important to perform by workers is to take care of the development and comfort of children, show them new opportunities, and nurture their ambitions and passion. But, essentially, they should help them build their self-esteem and counteract the creation of the isolated and institutionalized identity of children.

THE METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE OWN EMPIRICAL STUDY ABOUT PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES AMONG CHILDREN PLACED IN CHILDREN'S HOME

Family relationships are very dynamic and frequently resemble a sine wave. The quality of the relationships between parents and their children is determined by various factors. Parental attitudes exert a substantial impact on the way children function in adulthood. Since the relationships between parents and their children are charged with various emotions, they may pose an obstacle for the solid assessment of their relationships. This fact was my source of inspiration for exploring the opinion of parental attitudes among children residing the educational care centre, namely the socialization centre.

Etiology of placing children in children's homes is wide and complex. Nevertheless, in most cases it happens to children and teenagers coming from dysfunctional families whose parents fail to provide them with the appropriate upbringing. Education care centres should provide their children with good social and living conditions as well as a sense of security and belonging, which they have not experienced in their homes. However, in some cases the family relationship is so powerful that it can diminish the sense of rejection and painful memories. It is the cause for numerous escapes and confabulations concerning family.

AIMS, SUBJECT AND RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The aim of the study was to determine how children in care perceive parental attitudes. The subject of the study was defined as parental attitudes. Consequently, the following research problems were formulated:

1. Does the stay in a children's home contribute to the negative assessment of parental attitudes?

2. What is the connection between the sex of children and their opinion on parental attitudes?

3. What are the differences in the perception of mothers and fathers' attitudes within the group?

METHOD, TECHNIQUE AND RESEARCH TOOLS

The indispensable element of a research process is to determine the method, technique and research tool in order to conduct the study properly, the diagnostic survey and questionnaire were used. The researcher intentionally used a survey technique to remain anonymous in terms of increasing sincerity among study group. The huge potential of the planned research was the fact that the research will be carried out among all children of children home ensuring the anonymity of respondents. However, the small turnout of respondents, lack of agreement on research and the lack of reliable answers given by respondents could be a barrier. As a result, studies were carried out properly without obstacles and the respondents very seriously approached the study.

Questionnaire of Retrospective Assessment of Parental Attitudes, developed by Mieczyslaw Plopa, was selected is the research tool. In all, it consists of 100 statements: 50 statement concerns mother and 50 father. The subjects completed the questionnaire on their own using a five-point scale. Questionnaire was solved by respondents independently by answering a five-point scale from (a) to (e) where (a) is a complete agreement with the statement, and (e) definitive disagreement with the statement. Plopa (2011, 362–364) emphasises that such a questionnaire construction is based on the theoretical assumptions which distinguish six types of the relationship between a parent and a child. During the analysis of the questionnaire, they were defined in the following way: over-protection, over-demandingness, acceptance, independence and inconsistency in the undertaken activities. Positive parental attitudes includes acceptance, autonomy, positive protecting - ensuring care for the child, putting the proper requirements, as well as consequences in parental behavior. In contrast, inappropriate parental attitudes concerns rejection – lack of acceptance of the child, lack of autonomy expressed with imposing sentence, behavior, perception of the world, as well as interfering with the privacy of the child, over-protecting or overprotection, excessive demands and restrictive treatment of the child, inconsistency in the action of the parent, which prevents the child to learn the rules of society. The questionnaire is created with 100 statements showing the emotional attitude of parent–child relation. It allows identification of those relationship with the parents – separately mother and father.

THE PROFILE OF THE STUDY GROUP

The study was aimed at 28 children of the educational care centre, namely the socialization centre, located in the small city in central Poland. The study group consisted of 13 girls and 15 boys. The next specified independent variable, which characterises the group and is necessary to verify the research problems under study, is the age of subjects. The study group comprised children and teenagers aged 8–18. The figure 2 presents detailed data. The research was voluntary and anonymous, all participants was informed about all regulations by the researcher, who described the purpose and object of research and the role of youth in the study. Volunteers received the questionnaires and filled them by themselves. Before the research procedure detailed instructions

Figure 2. Numerical data on the age of the study group

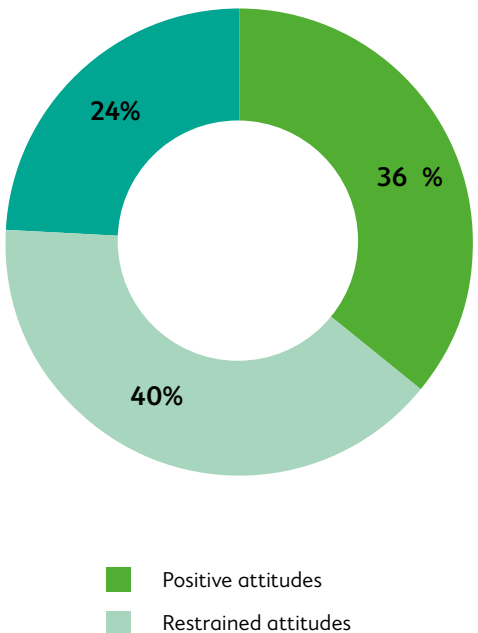*Figure 3. Parental attitudes in the opinion of the study group expressed in percentage terms*
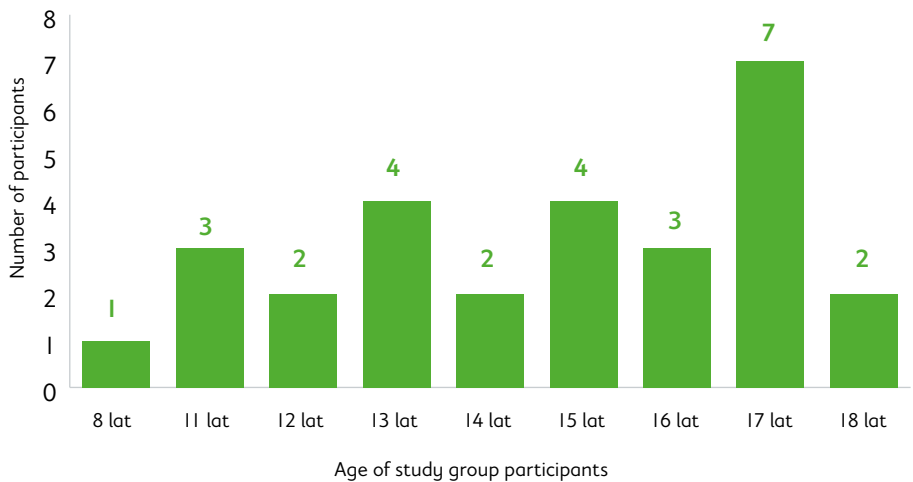
was presented. The duration of the study had no limitations. It results of ensuring the comfort of the research and avoiding the feeling of rush. Overall, the study last about 40 minutes.

THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The necessary introduction into the verification and analysis of the particular research problems is the presentation of parental attitudes in the opinion of the study group.

The restrained attitudes constitute 40% while the positive attitudes with 36% makes up the second largest group and the negative attitudes with 24% – the smallest group. It is worth mentioning that the majority of subjects assess their parents' attitudes as restrained and positive, which are characterized by acceptance, independence, reasonable expectations, consistent behaviours and the guarantee of the adequate protection.

The first research problem concerned the connection between the stay in an educational care centre and the assessment of parental attitudes. Everyday observation of the social reality forced the researcher to verify this problem. The results indicate unequivocally that the stay in an educational care centre does not contribute to the negative assessment of the parental attitudes. On the contrary, it can be noted that some children develop defence mechanisms by means of which they idealize parental attitudes. Rationalisation and euphemisms are expressed by means of confabulation. The analysis of the results indicates that only 24% of the study group assesses their

Figure 4. Parental attitudes in the opinion
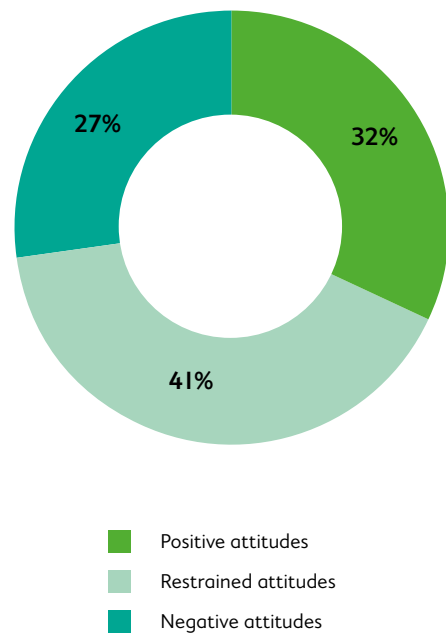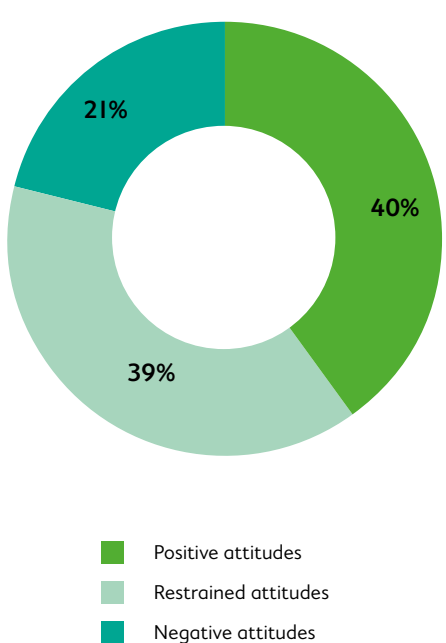of girls expressed in percentage terms

- Positive attitudes
- Restrained attitudes
- Negative attitudes

Figure 5. Parental attitudes in the opinion
of girls expressed in percentage terms

- Positive attitudes
- Restrained attitudes
- Negative attitudes

parents' attitudes as negative. These results may be determined by various factors, such as the reaction of society, categorising children in care as socially maladjusted, children's projections and a strong desire for happy family. At this point, a study on the parental attitudes in the opinion of the lower secondary school students conducted in 2013 by Matczak (2015) is worth mentioning. The outcomes of this study are identical with those obtained among the children of the children's home.

The results of the study conducted in 2013 indicate that lower secondary school students perceive their parents in the same way as the children of educational care centres. The majority of the lower-secondary school students define their parents' attitudes as restrained (40%). They are followed by the positive attitudes (37%) and the negative attitudes (23%). The fact that the outcomes are similar encourages reflection and discussion on the obtained results.

The next research problem concerns the correlation between the sex and the opinion on parental attitudes. The figures 4 and 5 show detailed data.

During the analysis of the outcomes obtained among girls it can be observed that the restrained attitudes (41%) the largest group constitute. They are followed by the positive attitudes (31%) and the negative attitudes (27%). The figure 5 illustrates the outcome obtained among boys.

Parental attitudes in the opinion of boys are quite varied: the restrained (40%) and positive (39%) attitudes constitute the vast majority, while the negative attitudes make up only 21%. When analysing the result of girls and boys separately it can be easily noted that, despite their difficult life situation, the adolescents assess their parents favourably. Attitudes defined as negative form the lowest percentage of all attitudes. When it comes to differences in the perception of parental attitudes according to the sex, it can be observed that boys assess their parent's attitudes more favourably. The

Figure 6. The division of mothers' attitudes in the opinion of the study group
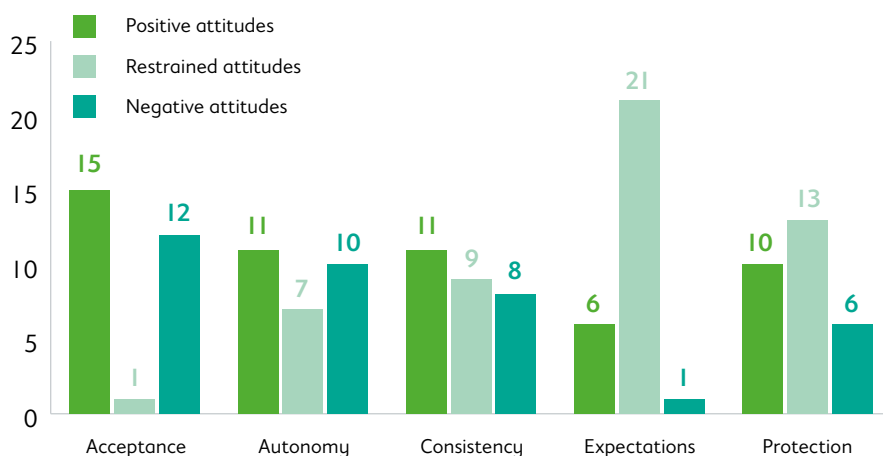
last research problem pertains to differences in the assessment of parental attitudes separately for mothers and fathers. Defining the parents' attitude towards their child is generally charged with emotions. The figure 6 illustrates detailed data.

The results of mothers' assessment regarding acceptance indicate the polarization and the clear division of the group into the positive and negative assessment. As far as demandingness is concerned, the subjects were virtually unanimous. The average result totals 21 answers while the over-demandingness is characterized only by one response.

The study suggests that mothers' attitudes in the opinion of the study group are assessed as positive and beneficial for the children's development. The majority of the profiles were marked by acceptance, autonomy and reasonable expectations.

The interesting premise based on the results of the study is the adequately high assessment of mothers as caring, overprotective and depriving their children of autonomy and independence. Considering the complicated situation of the teenagers participating in the study as well as numerous painful experiences and repressed childhood memories, on the basis of the results a mother can be depicted as a tender, warm and committed woman who always have their children's best interests in heart. A comparison between the outcomes of the study and the reality impel to reflect on pedagogical practices in the social area. The figure 7 shows data on the fathers' attitudes.

The results of fathers' assessment suggest that most fathers accept their children while 9 fathers adopt the rejecting attitude.

As regards the subsequent attitude, it can be easily noticed that, according to most responses, fathers adopt the positive attitude towards children's autonomy. The restrained attitude have 8 fathers while the negative 6. Consistent behaviours towards their children are displayed by 9 fathers, a lack of consistency by 8 and the restrained attitude by 7 fathers. Such results show little differentiation and a lack of complete domination of one attitude. The next attitude relates to expectations which are appropriate to children's age, development and abilities. This attitude is least differentiated of all under study. The negative attitude is adopted by 1 father, the restrained

Figure 7. The division of fathers' attitudes in the opinion of the study group
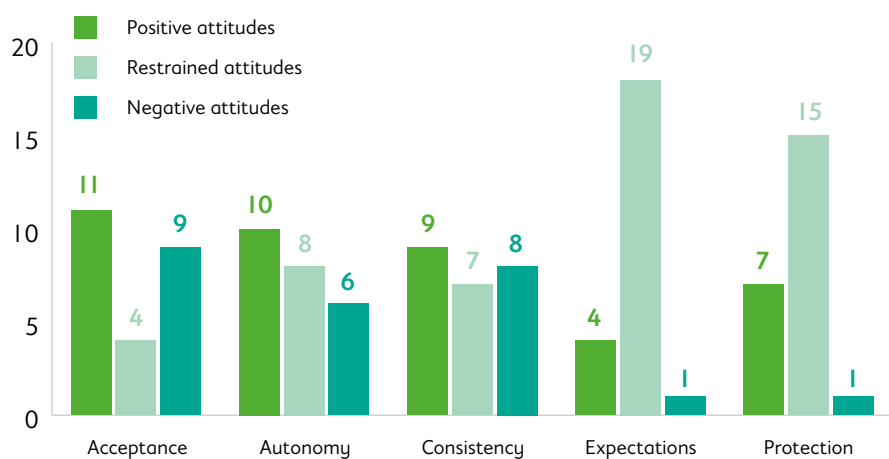
by 19 fathers and the positive by 4 fathers. The last attitude concerns the child's protection and, as in the previous case, the result are not diversified. 7 fathers have the positive attitude, 1 father the negative and 15 fathers the restrained. It can be clearly seen the study group assesses their fathers' attitudes as restrained. What is typical of the study group is defining their fathers as tolerant and devoted to them. They also bring up their children in the safe and consistent way. From the perspective of the problems under study, it should be noted that this study group is unique since their members do not have home and, thus, are isolated from a family environment. Frequently, they have only occasional contact with their parents or do not have any.

In conclusion, the children of the children's home defined their mothers and fathers as tolerant. Nevertheless, as to rejection, mothers were assessed as more rejecting than fathers. Visible differences occurred also in the division concerning protection. Over-protectiveness, which belongs to the negative attitude, is adopted by 1 father and 6 mothers, who are assessed as excessively protective, affectionate and depriving of child's autonomy. The results of the study show some tendencies and regularities in the assessment of mothers and fathers. Nevertheless, the study group assessed their parents positively.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Family, as the basic social unit, fulfils a significant role in life. From the very first moments, people need protection and support from their environment created, in most cases, by parents who exert a profound impact on the child's development in every aspect of their life. During the primary socialization, people learn the certain culture code as well as behaviour patterns from adults who are present in their life. The structured set of norms and actions is later implemented in the adulthood. That is why thoughtful and responsible behaviours towards children are of vital importance. The issues under study are intricate and embedded interdisciplinary across several fields, however, each of them draws attention to the category of person's development and factors determining this development. Returning to the analysis of the results of the study, it can be easily noticed that parents serve a vital role in life. Even if they do not live up to all expectations,

they are still important for their children. This is the reason why, if there is no legal prohibition, contact with relatives, especially parents, is crucial. Since the family relationships are unique, the image of a mother and a father built in the childhood becomes the model of a mother and a father in the adulthood. To conclude deliberation on this subject, one may ask whether there is a chance to create the efficient care system over children excluded from a family environment which does not disturb their development and free them from social stigma. In Poland, one can notice numerous changes for the better, for instance efficiently working educational care centres which provide their children with perfect conditions for development. Moreover, the large facilities are converting into smaller which adopt the family model. Another issues, such as the careful selection of qualified staff as well as the creation of new foundations aimed at supporting current and previous children of the educational care centres who start their independent life, should not be forgotten. Foster care is the area still being explored by the representatives of social science and implemented changes are systematically evaluated.

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Tuija Suikkanen-Malin

Common Parenting in Finnish Foster Care

This article aims to analyze the promise for better parenthood, made by Finnish society to children in substitute care. The article focuses on adults' thinking, practices and how they may be influenced to affect a child's positive development and behavior (Tideman et al. 2011). This article is based on a licentiate thesis of the author (Suikkanen-Malin 2015), which studied the co-operation between adults who share parental responsibilities of a child in substitute care. The research task was "How is the co-operation of adults sharing the parenting tasks of a child in substitute care depicted?" The background of the research lies in the theory of knowledge based on social constructionism, in which the nature of social constructions suggest that individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents (Guba & Lincoln 1994, 111). The research method is based on narrative thinking, in which through the creation of stories we create reality (Bruner 1986, 46). The research material consisted of two different data: the first data was written material about 65 stories collected by using a role-playing method and the second data consisted of two assessment groups' discussions. The stories were written and discussions held by parents of children in substitute care, foster parents, social workers and guardians to deputise for custodians in child protection.

The article provides the main findings from the actual study report. In the context of Finnish child welfare, one of the main aims is to reunite the family within the temporary nature of substitute care. In this context co-operation between adults is important for child, but it is also in the spirit of the Finnish Child Welfare Act. (LsL 2007.) One of the results of this study was that the best interest of a child takes place when adults are able to cooperate, despite contradictions and differing views. The focus of this article regards cooperative methods between adults in a substitute care setting.

FOSTER CARE AND PARENTING

In Finland the taking into custody and placement of a child into substitute care is not to act at the level of legislative level parents' overthrow of their children's lives. Supporting a child's parental relations is seen to be important, but research has shown it to have a minor role in foster care and parents often consider themselves as outsiders or being marginalized, (Alhanen 2014; Eronen 2013; Laakso 2009; Milligan & Stevens 2006; Berridge & Brodie 1998). The context of taking into custody aligns with constructionism in the right to make decisions of a child's everyday life to an organ of social welfare with the principle of proportionality. The task of parenting is divided, and the task of being a child's guardian is transferred to the organ of social welfare. A social worker assess the issues relating to each case as much as in necessary for a successful taking into care. (Saastamoinen 2010, 140–142.) The concept of parenting is manifold. It is not only cultural, but also social, economic and legal. Parenting also includes a biological and a psychological aspect. (Kääriäinen 2009, 108.) In Finnish Child Welfare, parenting is negotiation of good practices and it must be evaluated by professionals (Pitkänen 2011, 19). In this research, the concept of parenting means sharing tasks, as it is in Finland when a child is taken into care. The concept of shared

parenting is used in the meaning of sharing tasks. Shared parenting is not easy to link into larger social connections. In addition, biological parents and third parties such as child welfare workers in substitute care are not always recognized in professional discourses about shared parenting. They are only seen as parents' supporters or as a potential risk to the relationship between biological parents and a child or even to a child's development. (Vuori 2001, 368–375.)

Co-operation between the child who has been taken into care, the child related parties, family, foster parents and social workers has been seen as very important for the best interest of the child in Finnish statute (LsL 2007; Lavikainen & Ruuskanen 2013, 10–11). Parallel parenting as a concept indicates parenting from professional offsets of adults. Parents' experiences from their own roles in substitute care support the concept of parallel parenting, which can be realized with the help of professional support. (Pitkänen 2011, 88–90.) In all decision-making and responsible actions of adults, the main point should be the best interest of a child. The best interest of a child is defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) and in Finnish Social Welfare Act (ShL 1301/2014). Despite that, research has found institutional practices disputable in the realization of the best interest of a child (Featherstone et.al. 2014; Laakso 2013; Dance et al. 2008). Taking into care is the duty of society and the right of a child when it is necessary as an intervention. Also in child care, a child is an individual as well as a member of his/her family. (LsL 2007.) Together and separately, this gives social work a demanding mission to common and social parenting. Social work, supporting change, should understand the child´s situation but also different methods of intervention and community commitment (Featherstone et al. 2014). Common parenting is complicated and challenging in substitute care. The purpose of this research was to explore the co-operation between adults who share the parental responsibilities of a child in substitute care.

PARENTING AS A COMMON TASK

In the data of narratives, the target of parenting co-operation gave a child the possibility to trust adults' ability to co-operate. Co-operation was seen as being in the best interest of a child, when the child experienced reliable adult co-operation. Unsuccessful co-operation endangered the best interest of a child in the same way as a guardian dispute between parents.

Five model narratives arose from the story data. These models were named in reference to the interactions made by Kaarina Mönkkönen (2001, 435). All methods of co-operation fulfilled the best interest of a child as far as the disagreements were able to be solved using the equipment of each narrative model. The first model narrative was "Living situation" stories, which described the situation in which adults gathered together, but there was not any co-operation between them. This model was sufficient when the most important task was to confirm the consultation of all parties and to inform the child's situation. The "Social influence" model narrative describes an attempt to influence the others. In these descriptions the nature of the relationship between professionals and parents became visible. The parents were clearly influenced by the work of professionals. In the third model narrative, named "The game", the central question was the position of biological parents compared to substitute educators and especially to foster parents. Co-operation was seen in these stories as an action and rules of a game. This kind of co-operation was sufficient, if all the parties were committed to the common goal. In the model narrative named "Co-operation", the main element was clear distribution of work. In addition, the working relationship aimed to achieve a common understanding. Trust was also necessary in this narrative. The fifth model narrative was "Cooperation", describing the trust and construction of the relation from co-operation to collaboration where everyone has own importance in the achievement of results.

The role of a social worker as a responsible authority and the leader of parenting was greatly desired, and the success of the co-operation relied on a social worker's responsibility. He/she should prepare the co-operation as well as to invite the group members. A social worker was seen as the leader of parenting and the others expected him/her to also take the leadership. Common characteristics of a social workers identified within the stories, were especially strong interpersonal and customer relations skills. The concepts of interaction, co-operation and liaison were used as synonyms. Also information and communication were described as key to collaboration. Frequent adjectives describing co-operation for the best interest of a child were openness, trust and respect. The importance of smoothness and confidentiality of co-operation were highlighted in particular between parents and foster parents. Clear contracts, documents, and roles were important for supporting the course of action. There should be meaningful roles for everyone. For parents, the importance of discovering their own roles in relation to their child living in foster care has also been noticed in researches (Vähämaa 2008, 84) which is also easy to understand even in relation to everyday parenting and a parent's identity.

TENSIONS IN CO-OPERATION

In the discussion data, there were differences in the viewpoints towards the roles of parenting. The parents were desired for shared parenting and their position as parents in parenting tasks were obvious. Birth parenting is a strong social obligation. The Constitution of Finland protects parenthood and gives the parent rights outside substitute care. In foster care, however, there seemed to be suspicions. In this data, the parents described themselves as outsiders, while the authorities raised up questions about reports of possible reluctance or questioned the ability of the parents to share parenthood.

Foster parents reported positive experiences in everyday parenting and that they wanted to continue with it. They experienced tensions caused by the fact that they had hardly any rights of decisions for parenting. However, understanding and flexibility were expected of them in situations of conflict. Without clarification, the responsibility devolved from the society upon the parents and foster parents

In the discussion data, substitute care workers and social workers did not experience as if they were practicing parents. Everyday parenting was a challenge to substitute care workers, who didn´t consider themselves as foster parents. Although the duties of everyday parenting were recognized in their work, they did not recognize their place in actual parenting. Substitute care workers described their work as secondary work and residential care as a place of transit. They did not see themselves as the members who share the parenting.

In an ideological level and based on the analysis, the group that practiced common parenting was made up of biological parents, foster parents, workers in substitute care and social workers as leaders of parenting as well as the guardians, too. Social workers recognized their responsibility to take care of the child. However, they defined themselves outside of the parenting role, because their position was professional. This highlighted a different construction of the parenting concept.

SOCIAL WORKERS CONFIRMING PARENTING

On the basis of the research, social workers guarantee the best interests of a child in substitute care. He/she requires the skills of being proactive and taking responsible action and leadership in the

process of co-operation. Social work has to take its place as the implementer of common parenting. Exceptional tension emerged though, due to the fact that social workers did not feel as if they were involved in the parenting of a child in substitute care. The concept of parenthood should be clarified in order to fulfil the promise of the society for better parenthood. In particular the place of social work in parenting should be clarified so that the best interest of a child can be realized.

Co-operation is necessary within the Finnish child welfare system for children in substitute care. Adults should take care of common parenting tasks by clarifying each role. Implementation of the co-operation is individual, but it provides common discussion and agreements. The ability of adults to solve problems together prevents the child from becoming an instrument of conflicts and gives them the possibility to live their own life in peace. It is only in this way that society can fulfill the promise of better parenting for children in foster care.

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Satu Liiri

Encounters. Key Elements of Good Client Relationships in Residential Care for Children

INTRODUCTION

Child protection and residential care are environments that require sensitivity and provoke strong feelings. In the Finnish society, they face a myriad of prejudices, which can raise the threshold for seeking help and hamper the establishment of a confidential client relationship. In residential care within child protection, in particular, the relationship with the client is very close, and the work strongly interferes with the privacy of families. In institutional environments, this partly control-based client relationship can easily develop into confrontations and conflicts of various degrees between the professional and the client. (see Laakso 2009.)

In my Master's thesis (Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences), I outlined factors that should be addressed with special emphasis in regard to a good client relationship in residential care. As a special focus group for my development study, I selected young people who had been institutionalised for a longer period, as the age period including puberty brings along particular challenges for work commitment as well as commitment to the institution. In my development study, I wanted to give a voice to the institutionalised young people and their parents as well as the professionals within residential care. I gathered the material for the research by conducting a two-week observation period at a children's home for seven clients. In addition, the parents of the young people who had stayed at the unit for over six months participated in theme interviews. I analysed the results using Grounded Theory techniques, utilising coding and categorisation. After the categorisation, I theorised the results by linking them to previous research and literature.

In this article, I discuss the results of the development study, i.e., the factors that arose from the analysis that were relevant for the establishment of a good client relationship in residential care within child protection. A good educational partnership with the parents of the institutionalised child came up as one of these elements, and I will dedicate a separate section to this issue in the article.
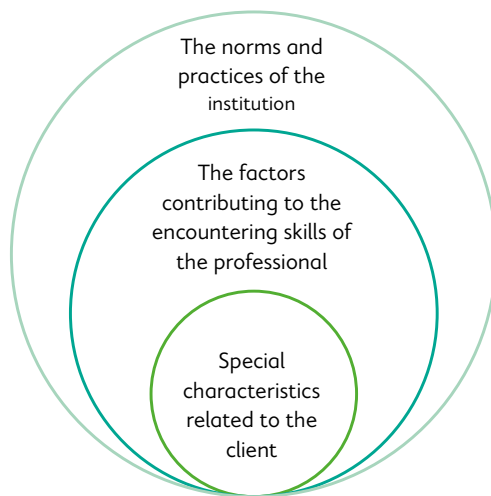
THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A GOOD CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

While it may be difficult to distinguish or name the factors related to the feeling of being received and met, professionals should nevertheless actively pay attention to the quality of the client relationship and interaction. For instance, according to the report of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the interactive skills of professionals within child protection could be improved, and some child protection clients even felt they had been mistreated. In addition, child protection services have been criticised for not taking the thoughts and experiences of clients sufficiently into account. (STM 2016, 33.)

Based on my development study, the experience of foster care clients of being received and met and having a good client relationship is based on several factors. Three levels arose from the coding of the material; these have been presented as a circular model (Figure 1). The different levels affect each other and interact closely with each other.

At the core of a good client relationship are special characteristics related to the client status, such as abandoning prejudice, factors affecting work commitment and the wish for peer support. While seeking various other forms of help is socially acceptable, child protection services, and foster care, in particular, are associated with the fear of being labelled. Through peer support, the parents are given the opportunity to share their experiences with people who have undergone similar events, and to rid themselves of feelings of shame and the fear of getting labelled. Abandoning prejudice was also seen as important for work attachment. Work attachment refers to work commitment and the gradual building of trust towards the professionals.

Figure 1. Factors contributing to a good client relationship

The norms and practices of the institution

The factors contributing to the encountering skills of the professional

Special characteristics related to the client

The core circle represents the factors contributing to the encountering skills of the professional. In foster care, the professional role of the workers is multifaceted and demanding, as the professional is required to have the courage to interfere in difficult and intimate issues, as well as to even set strict limits, when needed. Simultaneously, in addition to the pedagogical and controlling role, the professional has to strive to maintain an open and confidential relationship, in which the client can participate in issues regarding themselves. The majority of the factors on this level can be influenced both through the practices of the foster care institution and the modes of action of individual professionals. Important factors for the encountering skills of the professional include acknowledging the individuality of the client and the related ethical sensitivity; in other words, the ability to perceive matters from the perspective of the client and to make situation-based decisions. Other crucial characteristics of the professional include the ability to regulate their own emotional level and to maintain a positive atmosphere.

The outer circle is constituted of the norms and practices of the institution. They can have a significant impact on the client's experience of participation and trust. According to the study, the practices of the institution should support the participation of the institutionalised young person as well as strengthening the parents' experience of being taken into account. In addition, various practices and policies guide the opportunities that individual professionals have to utilise their own sensitivity, knowledge and personality as their tools at work. It is also crucial to recognise how the practices of the institution may, at best, contribute to well-being at work. When the well-being of the work community and the workers is cared for, clients also encounter professionals who are doing well.

A GOOD EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

The institutionalised child is often understood as being the actual client, but according to Becker-Weidman (2013, 21), among others, the inclusion of parents is essential for achieving good results from residential care and work. It is thus important to strive to create a strong educational partnership between the biological parents and the professionals educating the child in foster care, as this has also been shown to support the work attachment of the child.

The basis of the educational partnership constitutes of forming dialogical interaction and a confidential partnership between the home and educational environments of the child. The idea of educational partnership stems from the furthering of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in cooperation between the family and child education and protection services. The objective is to ensure collaborative and comprehensive care for the child through educational partnership. (THL 2014.) Educational partnership has also been called a work alliance, which refers to the commitment of the professionals and the parents to collaborating in matters related to the child (Klap 2005, 89). For a good educational partnership, it is essential to form a service culture that allows the child's own voice as well as the parents' knowledge related to their child to be heard. Indeed, in addition to acknowledgement, trust and dialogue, appreciation and respect also play a crucial role in educational partnership. (THL 2014.)

The relationship between the parents and the institutionalised child may at first be very conflicting and exacerbated. Returning home may not always even be the objective when working with the child, but even in these cases, the parents are influential people in regard to the life of their child. It has also been argued that it is only possible to understand the behaviour of the child when their family relationships are understood (Klap 2005, 79). The inclusion of the parents in the work is thus often justified and collaboration between professionals and parents should primarily be facilitated. In addition, the broad experiences of foster care professionals emphasize that addressing the issues of the child does not solve the overall situation of the family. By taking the family as a whole into account, more permanent results and changes are more likely to be achieved. If the situation is extremely exacerbated, the professional might have to take on the task of making visible those things that make the parent–child relationship unique and worth salvaging.

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