

## Introduction

Overall we have little information about children coming from other countries who are placed in adoptive families. Many adopted children from Central and Eastern Europe have entered the United States without a clear picture of their former history. It appears that many of these children have a history of institutionalisation.

Groza, Proctor and Guo studied the development of children adopted from Romanian institutions. They compared these children with children from the same country who lived with their families before adoption. The research question is: how does placement history affect child development at placement?

The research findings suggest that the length of time and the age of the child when institutionalised have significant effects on development. There is a delay in several developmental functions: motor skills, language skills and social skills.

These data have implications for policy development in countries like Romania (children should not be institutionalised during sensitive periods in their lives and the care of children who reside in institutions should be improved). Also, families need to be prepared to adopt.

Day care centres are well-known institutions of youth care. Foster day care, however, is a new programme which allows the child to be placed in a foster day care family and enables parents and foster day care parents to receive guidance from the day care centre.

The research question is: what target group can profit for this form of day care?

Strijker and Zandberg followed the parents and their children for a period of three years. Each year the children's development was measured by the CBCL (Child Behaviour Checklist) and the Family Climate Scale (FCS).

The authors distinguished between a successful placement (children who have been placed back home again) and a placement failure (children who have been placed in a foster family or residential home). A comparison between these two groups shows that the success of a placement is not determined by the characteristics of the foster day care children but exclusively by the characteristics of the home situation. The children's development depends largely upon their family background.

Although in recent years the quest for quality in child welfare services has been at the top of the agenda, very little research has been done into the impact of job satisfaction in this sector. Van der Ploeg and Scholte make a start by presenting the findings of an exploratory research among Dutch professional child care workers in residential treatment centres.

Although most child care workers in residential homes were satisfied with their jobs, the findings also pointed out that substantial numbers of them were dissatisfied. The researchers analysed that the job-satisfaction of residential child care workers can be divided in five dimensions: supervision, relationships with colleagues, participation, management of the work and commitment to the institution. Most child care workers were satisfied with the relationships with their co-workers. However, about half were not satisfied with the quality of the supervision. Moreover, a substantial number were hardly committed to their institutions and were actually looking around for another job.

The study further shows that the older residential child care worker with more professional training and more work experience runs a higher risk of becoming dissatisfied with his or her job.

Hayden and Gorin initiated two research projects in order to gain more insight in children in care in England. The data collected within the context of these projects is extensive and a variety of research instruments were used. The findings cover three main areas.

Firstly, the researchers report about the carers' experience of aggressive and threatening behaviour from the children in care. Most residential staff reported having felt physically threatened at some point in their careers. Disturbances in some units were such that one was closed during the research period. Closer analysis of violent incidents revealed that a disproportionate number was clustered around a few individual residents. Foster carers were much less likely to report that they or their children felt physically threatened by a foster child.

Secondly, the paper gives information about the range of problem behaviours children in care may exhibit. In residential care much behaviour related to violent and aggressive incidents and absconding. Other types of problem behaviour mentioned: automutilation, attention-seeking, inappropriate sexualised behaviours, bullying etc. Foster carers are confronted with problems such as emotionally abused children, children with learning difficulties etc.

Thirdly, Hayden and Gorin explore the stress factors in the lives of children in care and conclude that many had experienced both residential and foster care environments.

Youth policy in the Netherlands has changed during the last thirty years. It moved from a policy with huge aspirations for the future into a policy with moderate pretensions and focused on a limited group of youngsters-at-risk. Before identifying three decades of youth policy, Notten and Elling describe the situation of youngsters in the modern industrial state. In the past, the general view was that children need to be educated and protected from insanity and vagrancy. A clear-cut youth policy did not exist.

The first identifiable youth policy manifested itself in 1969. It focused on supporting young people through the third tier (leisure activities such as recreation, youth clubs and organisations). A second decade of youth policy began in 1984. A governmental programme

was published with two central notions: a no-nonsense approach and responsibility with an emphasis on family and educational networks. At the end of 1993 a third trend in youth policy crystallised. The main policy was aimed at young people at risk (homeless, unemployed or delinquent youngsters, etc.). Investing in these youngsters was regarded as an investment in society's stability. The authors critically analyse these changes in youth policy in the Netherlands.

Most societies in the world agree that child neglect is one of the most important factors threatening the healthy development of children. At the same time, however, the phenomenon itself is neglected by many of those societies, as well as by their welfare systems. It is clearly not a very attractive topic to discuss, and many communities and social workers do not know how to handle child neglect issues. Daniel puts the finger on this painful topic by suggesting that powerlessness is at the heart of this contradictory phenomenon. The author argues that child neglect is rooted in parental powerlessness, which in its turn induces lack of power in the neglected children. Simultaneously the powerlessness of the classical social work approach with respect to issues relating to child neglect reinforces the powerlessness of the neglecting parents and their children. The author suggests three steps to tackle this downward vicious circle: more rigorous attention to a comprehensive assessment of needs, not focusing on problems but on the existing empowering factors in the families, offering long-term services to powerless families, and mobilisation of all possible resources within the extended family system.