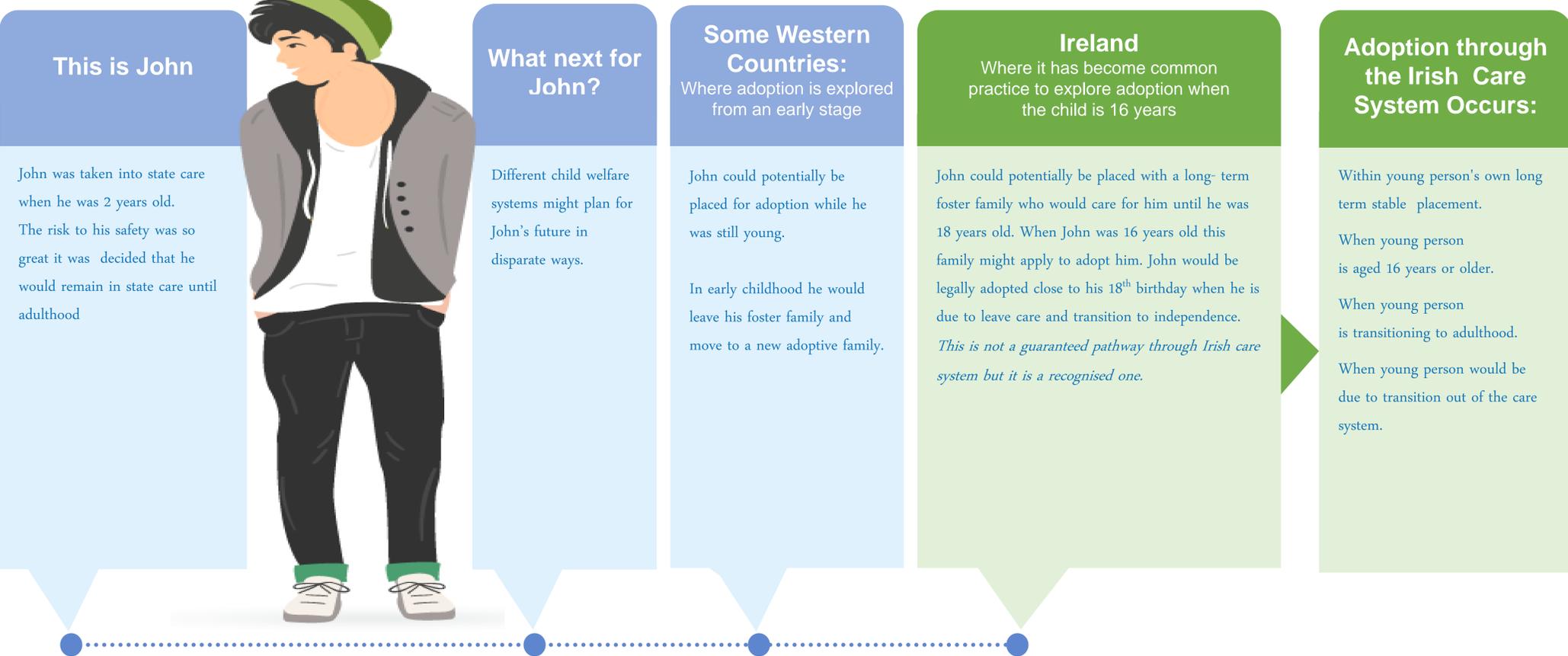




The Lived Experience of Young Adults Adopted Late by their own Long-Term Foster Carers

Sinéad Whiting PhD Candidate, School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. Supervisor: Professor Robbie Gilligan



The issues at the centre of this study:

- Late adoption from within a stable foster placement changes legal status but not practical circumstances.
- The change in status from 'being in care' to 'being adopted', occurs as the young person is due to exit care and potentially holds symbolic meaning that continues to be significant in early adulthood.
- Being adopted, as the young person exits care, potentially causes an emotional shift and impacts their experiences of transition in multiple areas of their life.

The Irish System of late adoption creates an ideal 'laboratory' from which to study these issues.

Research Questions

1. What is the lived experience of young adults adopted late from long term stable care?
2. How does late adoption, from within a stable foster placement, impact the young adults' experiences of youth transitions?

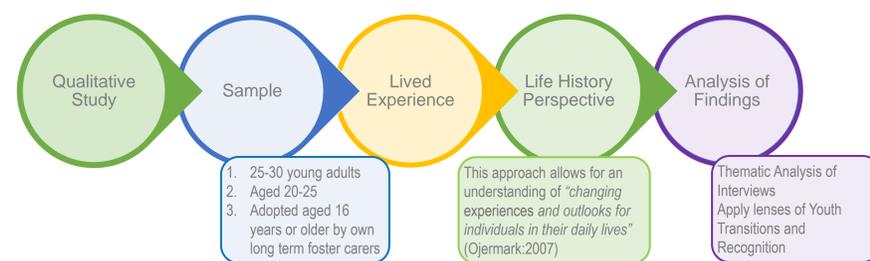
Literature

1. Current literature focuses on adoption-from-care as a means of providing secure attachments through placement stability for young children in state care. (Tresiliotis, 2002; Haight et al, 2003; Barth et al, 2005; Dance and Rushton, 2005; Hanna et al, 2011; Biehal, 2012).
2. The lens of transitions is increasingly used to understand experiences of care leavers moving from care to independence. (Gilligan, 2018; Storo, 2018; Stein, 2012; Mendes, 2005).
3. Attachment remains of significant importance for looked after children but the lens of recognition has begun to be applied to understand childcare issues (Thomas, 2012; Warming, 2015; Ridley et al, 2016; Paulsen, 2017; Houston and Montgomery, 2017)

Potential Contribution of the Study

1. Provide lived experience accounts of late adoption from stable long-term care gaining insight into the meaning young adults attach to being adopted late and how this impacts their lives beyond childhood into adulthood.
2. Contribute to our understanding of how young adults process the shift from care status to adopted status in their late teenage years and how this interacts with other experiences of transition.
3. Apply new theoretical perspective of 'Recognition' and 'Youth Transitions' to this issue revealing the potential symbolic meaning young adults attach to being adopted late.

Study Design



Key Considerations & Challenges

1. Engaging Stakeholders
2. Recruitment

Next Steps

1. Seek ethical approval from my university and from Tusla; the Child and Family Agency responsible for child welfare in Ireland.
2. Continue with literature review
3. Convene an Advisory Committee.
4. Commence Recruitment and Data Collection.

Contact Details



Sinéad Whiting
PhD Researcher with practice experience

@sineadwhiting
whitings@tcd.ie

Selected References

- Biehal, N., (2012). A sense of belonging: Meanings of family and home in long-term foster care. *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(4), pp.955-971.
- Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005). Joining a new family: the views and experiences of young people placed with permanent families during middle childhood. *Adoption & Fostering*, 29(1), 18-28.
- Gilligan, R. (2018) Resilience, Transitions and Leaving Care Chapter 4 in, editor(s) Varda Mann-Feder & Martin Goyette, Leaving Care and the Transition to Adulthood: International Contributions to Theory, Research and Practice, New York, Oxford University Press
- Ojermark, A. (2007). Presenting Life Histories: a literature review and annotated bibliography.
- Paulsen, V. and Thomas, N., 2017. The transition to adulthood from care as a struggle for recognition. *Child & Family Social Work*.
- Stein, M. (2012). *Young people leaving care: Supporting pathways to adulthood*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Storo, J. (2017). Which transition concept is useful for describing the process of young people leaving state care? A reflection on research and language. *European Journal of Social Work*, 20(5), 770-781.
- Triseliotis, J., 2002. Long-term foster care or adoption? The evidence examined. *Child & Family Social Work*, 7(1), pp.23-33.
- Warming, H., 2015. The life of children in care in Denmark: A struggle over recognition. *Childhood*, 22(2), pp.248-262.

Bibliography

- Barth, R.P., Crea, T.M., John, K., Thoburn, J. and Quinton, D., 2005. Beyond attachment theory and therapy: Towards sensitive and evidence-based interventions with foster and adoptive families in distress. *Child & Family Social Work*, 10(4), pp.257-268.
-
- Biehal, N., 2012. A sense of belonging: Meanings of family and home in long-term foster care. *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(4), pp.955-971.
-
- Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005). Joining a new family: the views and experiences of young people placed with permanent families during middle childhood. *Adoption & Fostering*, 29(1), 18-28.
-
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8(1), 54-63.
-
- Gilligan, R. (2018) Resilience, Transitions and Leaving Care Chapter 4 in, editor(s)Varda Mann-Feder & Martin Goyette , *Leaving Care and the Transition to Adulthood: International Contributions to Theory, Research and Practice*, New York, Oxford University Press
-
- Greene, M. J. (2014). On the inside looking in: Methodological insights and challenges in conducting qualitative insider research. *The qualitative report*, 19(29), 1-13.
-
- Haight, W.L., Kagle, J.D. and Black, J.E., 2003. Understanding and supporting parent-child relationships during foster care visits: Attachment theory and research. *Social work*, 48(2), pp.195-207.
-
- Hanna, M., Tokarski, K., Matera, D. and Fong, R., 2011. Happily ever after? The journey from foster care to adoption. *Adoption quarterly*, 14(2), pp.107-131.
-
- Houston, S. and Montgomery, L., 2017. Reflecting critically on contemporary social pathologies: social work and the 'good life'. *Critical and Radical Social Work*, 5(2), pp.181- 196.
-
- Mendes, P., & Moslehuddin, B. (2006). From dependence to interdependence: Towards better outcomes for young people leaving state care. *Child Abuse Review*, 15(2), 110-126.
-
- Paulsen, V. and Thomas, N., 2017. The transition to adulthood from care as a struggle for recognition. *Child & Family Social Work*.
-
- Ridley, J., Larkins, C., Farrelly, N., Hussein, S., Austerberry, H., Manthorpe, J. and Stanley, N., 2016. Investing in the relationship: practitioners' relationships with looked-after children and care leavers in *Social Work Practices*. *Child & Family Social Work*, 21(1), pp.55-64.
- Stein, M. (2012). *Young people leaving care: Supporting pathways to adulthood*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Storø, J. (2017). Which transition concept is useful for describing the process of young people leaving state care? A reflection on research and language. *European Journal of Social Work*, 20(5), 770–781...
-
- Thomas, N., 2012. Love, rights and solidarity: Studying children's participation using Honneth's theory of recognition. *Childhood*, 19(4), pp.453-466.
-
- Triseliotis, J., 2002. Long-term foster care or adoption? The evidence examined. *Child & Family Social Work*, 7(1), pp.23-33.
-
- Warming, H., 2015. The life of children in care in Denmark: A struggle over recognition. *Childhood*, 22(2), pp.248-262.