IMPACT CASE STUDY 1

Removal, Transitions and Trauma: Retrospective Perspectives of Children and Youth, and International Best Practices on Transition Management

March 2017 | Office of Community-University Engagement
This *Impact Case Study* was produced by Dr. Crystal Tremblay in collaboration with the faculty lead(s) identified in the following case study. All twelve *Impact Case Studies* were included in Dr. Crystal Tremblay’s research project, *Community-Engaged Research (CER) at the University of Victoria 2009—2015*, that scanned the impact of UVic’s involvement with community-engaged research over a six-year period.

Dr. Tremblay’s research was supported by the Office of Community-University Engagement and the Office of the Vice-President Research. Learn more about this project at uvic.ca/ocue/research.
Removal, Transitions and Trauma: Retrospective Perspectives of Children and Youth, and International Best Practices on Transition Management

UN Sustainable Development Goals addressed by this project

3. Health & well-being
16. Promote peaceful & inclusive societies for sustainable development,

UVic's International Plan Goals addressed by this project

- International Development, Health and Education

Improving transitions for young people entering, moving through and exiting care

Faculty Leads: James Anglin & Angela Scott, School of Child & Youth Care

Partners: Several representatives in Nanaimo, Duncan and Victoria working for local Ministry of Children & Family Development (MCFD) offices or community agencies, as well as the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks.

Project timeframe: 2015-2017

Funding: MCFD Shared Research Agenda

Website: Not yet available
About

In response to the MCFD call for research proposals, we proposed a two-fold research project which involved a) interviews and focus groups with a sample of former youth in care, and b) a review of relevant Canadian, North American and international literature on best practices of transition management involving youth in care. The faculty member on this research team has undertaken research on group care programs in British Columbia in the past (Anglin, 2002, 2004, 2011, 2014), and interviewed youth in care and former youth in care as part of this research. Conversations with residents and former residents (informal and formal) provided important information on the quality of care experienced and the elements and processes of change that occurred for the young people while in care. In general, such data are infrequently accessed for research studies in child welfare, and yet potentially they can provide important information and insights into current practices and how such practices can be enhanced in the future. There are some notable exceptions in the international literature (e.g. Brown & Seita, 2009; Rodrigues, del Valle & Barbosa-Ducharme, in press), and within the Canadian context (Raychaba, 1988, 1993; Snow and Finlay, 1989).

The challenge of transitions for young people entering, moving through and exiting care is acknowledged in the child and youth care literature internationally, and there is recognition that this is an area needing significant improvement. Accounts of child welfare workers appearing on the doorstep of group or foster homes and announcing to the young person “pack your things, and come with me” are all too common. The current literature on trauma is increasingly identifying ways in which children’s psycho-emotional pain is triggered in ways that can retraumatize.

There is a significant need for all professionals involved in child care and child protection, as well as in the mental health and youth justice systems, to hear from the young people themselves about their experiences of transitions into, through and out of the care system. Policies and practices need to be informed by the stories of the young people living the realities of the impacts of these policies and practices (Brown & Seita, 2009; Raychaba, 1988, 1993). The collaboration and support of MCFD and the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN) will be important in accessing former youth in care. The FBCYICN has agreed to actively support this study including consultation on interview and focus group questions and recruiting former youth in care for the study. Research ethics approval will be required.

"Impacts included recommendations for improved child welfare and child care policies, programs, training and practices that will enhance well-being of youth in care, as well as proposed new institutional practices in child welfare"

Level of Impact: Individual Community Systems

Extent of community collaboration throughout the project cycle  49%

Key successes & challenges

The key success was a report to the MCFD.

A challenge was finding participants was a challenge; there seems to be interview fatigue in this sector, and one must work through personal contacts. Emails, posters etc. do not work!
Student role & Impact

Master’s student made contacts with the agencies and held interviews on-site at several of them.

Student impact was no less than transformative. The student developed sophisticated research skills and applied them in an impressive manner. This student is now turned on to research, is doing a job in the community involving research, and is thinking about pursuing a PhD within next 2 years. Before this project, having a career in research or doing a PhD were unthinkable from her perspective.

"Student impact was no less than transformative. The student developed sophisticated research skills and applied them in impressive manner"

Key research findings

Youth in care suffer the loss of family and community love and support, and through their stories, we propose ways to respond more effectively to their psycho-emotional pain and feel loved.

Outputs

- Refereed journal publications
- Refereed conference papers
- Non-refereed publications
- Multimedia products
- Students employed
- Invited Presentations
- Consulting with government & non-government bodies

Outcomes

- Student skills, knowledge, attributes towards capacity building
- Development of new and improved theory (ground theory framework)
- Increased inter-university linkages

Key factors for a successful CER project

Careful planning, good consultation with UVic Research Services and Knowledge Mobilization.

Key References

MCFD report available in December 2016. Title: "Removal, Transitions and Trauma: Retrospective Perspectives of Children and Youth, and International Best Practices on Transition Management".