Constructing Narrative Identity and Capabilities of Finnish Reform School Adolescents

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Abstract

Most studies of adolescents placed in foster care due to severe conduct problems have focused on their problems, while adolescents with healthy adulthood condition remain understudied. In Finland, adolescents with severe conduct problems are placed in reform schools (RS). The purpose of this study was to examine how former RS adolescents' narrative identity and capability construction interact in different phases of their life-stories. Semi-structured life-story interviews were conducted with 13 former RS adolescents with healthy adulthood condition. Data were analyzed using a narrative constructivist method. We found a story in which the theoretical elements found from the research material were especially rich and thick and decided to present it as a case example of our findings—Anna's story. The analysis showed that capabilities were closely related to RS adolescents' identity construction and well-being. Strengthened capabilities provided material for identity construction, such as identities of meaning making, agency, redemption, and communion. The findings of the study point out that out-of-home care adolescents' stable and trusting relationships should be supported as they may strengthen capabilities and help develop feelings of meaningfulness, belonging, experienced parity of participation and senses of coherence.

Keywords Narrative research · Reform school adolescents · Foster care · Narrative identity · Capability approach

Child protection services are legislated under Finnish child welfare law. Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health prepares and supervises the legislation of child protection services. Out-of-home placements of children include foster care, professional foster care and institutional care. Finnish municipalities are responsible for the arrangement of child welfare services, and the services can also be bought from private service provider.

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Reform schools (RS) in Finland are child welfare institutions that organize demanding substitute care and special care education. They are organized by national board of education and Finnish Institute for health and welfare. RS is the final child welfare service resort for out-of-home care (OOHC) children and adolescents displaying disruptive behavior, substance abuse, delinquency and severe school dysfunction, and its aim is to secure their care, compulsory education, and mental health services. In Finland, around 19,000 children (1.6% of the 0 to 20-year-old age group) were placed in out-of-home care (OOHC) in 2020, while only 250–280 (1.4%) of them were placed in RS (THL, 2021). The Reform schools are organized as small, home-like environments with 30–40 adolescents in each. The residents attend a specialized elementary school, share meals, and participate in various constructive activities such as sports, music playing and holiday trips. In addition, they are provided with physical and mental health care services. More information on the Finnish RS system and RS facilities can be found from the official RS website (English version: https://valtionkoulukodit.fi/en/).

In Finland and other Nordic countries, disruptive behavior and juvenile delinquency are treated within the health
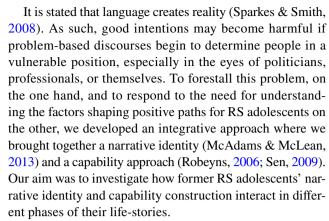
and educational system, as well as the welfare system. The aim is to focus on rehabilitation, and only a few adolescents below the age of 18 are imprisoned annually. In other countries, such as the US and the UK, juvenile delinquency and disruptive behavior are treated in the juvenile court system, and a substantial number of minors are sentenced to prison (Hartney, 2006; Lappi-Seppälä, 2011).

Despite rehabilitation, the current adult-age prognosis for Finnish RS adolescents is often poor. For example, adult criminality (Manninen et al., 2017), mental health problems (Manninen et al., 2011, 2018, 2021), reproductive health problems (Lehti et al., 2015) premature mortality (Manninen et al., 2015) and poor educational outcomes (Talaslampi et al., 2019) are very common in this group. Studies from other Nordic countries show similar development paths from teenage to adulthood of children and adolescents with behavioral problems including very high rates of premature death, serious involvement in crime, hospitalizations for mental-health problems, teenage parenthood, self-support problems and low educational attainment (Vinnerljung & Sallnäs, 2008).

Perhaps due to the poor overall prognosis, both RS adolescents and OOHC adolescents in general have usually been studied through a focus on their problems, while those in a healthy adulthood condition have received less attention. Positive development pathway is not well-known, although reliable information regarding factors contributing to positive development path would be crucial for developing the care in foster care facilities. However, a few studies have focused on those OOHC adolescents who have achieved a more stable adulthood. These studies most often utilize a qualitative method, more specifically—a narrative method.

Based on the studies, OOHC adolescents' stable and trusting relationships might contribute to their sense of security, permanence and belonging (Schofield et al., 2017). These relationships also seem to enhance their greater resilience (Drapeau et al., 2007). Resilience is defined as "positive adaptation or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity" (Herrman et al., 2011). The narrative studies also show that secure relationships might enhance better coping after the placement (Niiranen et al., 2021; Schofield et al., 2017). Coping is understood as "efforts to prevent or diminish threat, harm, and loss, or to reduce associated distress". It can be more or less automatic (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Residential care leavers often attribute very different meanings to their experiences, which affect their identity construction, resilience and the need for support. For example, if young people, based on their life-experiences, identify themselves as troublemakers, it will affect their self-esteem and future actions differently, than if they identify themselves with a more positive identity (Schofield et al., 2017).

It is stated that language creates reality (Sparkes & Smith, 2008). As such, good intentions may become harmful if problem-based discourses begin to determine people in a vulnerable position, especially in the eyes of politicians, professionals, or themselves. To forestall this problem, on the one hand, and to respond to the need for understanding the factors shaping positive paths for RS adolescents on the other, we developed an integrative approach where we brought together a narrative identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013) and a capability approach (Robeyns, 2006; Sen, 2009). Our aim was to investigate how former RS adolescents' narrative identity and capability construction interact in different phases of their life-stories.

In contrast to previous studies, we study RS adolescents whose development paths have resulted in healthy adulthood to understand constituents to support adolescents already during the RS placement. We perceive adolescents as capable agents who are able to participate their own developmental processes (Biggeri et al., 2011). Our aim is to combine narrative identity research with capability approach, as narrative identity research can offer important information on marginalized groups' capability construction, which might remain hidden when studying groups involving in mainstream research.

Narrative Identity

McAdams and McLean (2013) state that narrative identity is a person's internalized and slowly evolving life-story, which integrates memories of the past and expectations of the future, providing unity and purpose in a person's life. In order to develop a narrative identity, a person must first learn how to share stories in his or her cultural environment and significant groups (i.e., families, peers, and other formal and informal social contexts). McAdams and McLean (2013) have created coding constructs that include the categorization of essential narrative elements associated with life-story identities, i.e., agency, communion, redemption, contamination, meaning making, exploratory narrative processing, and coherent positive resolution. This is a tool for analyzing the development of narrative identities during individual's life-story. In other words, each coding construct corresponds an important transition in a life-story.

Meaning making is a central process in the development of narrative identity. Through meaning making, an individual describes the sequence of the central events of life in a more detailed way (i.e., forms a plot) and may even go beyond that plot to describe who one is (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Reese et al., 2010). Research has particularly shown that an ability to attribute redemptive meanings while narrating adversities in life might enhance mental health, well-being and maturity (McAdams & McLean, 2013;

McAdams et al., 2001). Especially narratives, in which both meaning making and agency appear, are important (McAdams & McLean, 2013). The research also shows that meaning making can be a demanding task, and may sometimes require exertion, or hard work (McAdams & McLean, 2013).

Narration might support adolescents' coping, self-understanding, and the building up of self-capacity. Telling a story of one's own experiences may enhance an individual's own ability to get in touch and connect with their own feelings and experiences. It also connects difficult experiences as part of a person's life-stories and further with their narrative identities. As such, narration seems especially important among OOHC adolescents, who have difficult life-events behind them, and who face the threat of adopting a negative story or stigma produced by the surrounding environment as a part of their identity (Känkänen & Bardy, 2014). Thus, it is important to shift the tone of narration from negative to positive.

Capability Approach

OOHC adolescents' life-paths are heavily influenced by restricted living conditions and negative stories that affect their capability to function. CA has been applied when explaining children's abilities to function in the surrounding structures, e.g., in the goods and services at their disposal (Biggeri et al., 2006; Featherstone & Gupta, 2017; Kjellberg & Jansson, 2020; Schweiger & Graf, 2015). Biggeri et al (2011) stated that children need particular resources and policies—like nurturing environment and nutritional requirements—to enjoy similar capabilities and functionings as adults.

According to CA, a capability is referred to as an individual's ability to function in his or her social structures (Robeyns, 2006; Sen, 2009). On the individual level, a capability is freedom to achieve a range of functions (in CA terms: functionings) such as constructive activities or control over stress level. Capabilities are also closely related to instrumental freedoms (e.g., democracy, healthcare services, education, social security, and child welfare services). CA does not solely focus on what a person actually does, but on what a person is capable of doing and whether or not they choose to make use of that opportunity (Sen, 2009). The ability to convert resources or commodities into capabilities and functionings is dependent on conversion factors. They can be both internal (e.g., personality traits, age, sex) and societal/environmental (e.g., public policies, institutions, legal rules, traditions, social norms, power relations) (Biggeri et al., 2011).

When studying lone mothers in the margins of society, Isola et al. (2020) discerned that previous studies have sparsely examined the role of conversion factors in capabilities and functioning, although they play a great role in capability construction. Thus, we consider human needs as conversion factors, as they are the natural drivers of functioning (Max-Neef, 1991). Moreover, amongst many human needs, we explore the need for participation, understanding, belonging, and meaningfulness as conversion factors. The experienced disparity of participation, incoherence, and senses of non-belonging and meaninglessness prevent capabilities from emerging and further developing. If an individual considers something impossible, they might not put any effort into pursuing it at all (Isola et al., 2021; Leemann et al., 2021). The other way around, their satisfaction may positively modify beliefs about possibilities, allowing then capabilities to emerging.

To sum up, the satisfaction of human needs and positive experiences resulting from it may help a person convert resources into capabilities and further into functions (Isola et al., 2020). As narrative identity work relates to human needs and satisfaction, such as understanding one's life, taking part in it and larger social circumstances we see that it may also function as a conversion factor. In the analysis section we describe, how we examined both capability construction and narrative identity construction in order to find out how former RS adolescents' make meaning of their life. We investigated capability construction by identifying the needs for participation, understanding, belonging, and meaningfulness as conversion factors, in line with previous comparable studies (Isola et al., 2020, 2021; Leemann et al., 2021). Moreover, we explored the construction of narrative identity by using life-story constructs created by McAdams and McLean (2013).

Method

Overview

In this study, a narrative life-story interview method was used while conducting the interviews (McAdams, 2008). This approach is rooted in an ontology that holds that reality is multiple and social in nature, compared to the traditional scientific viewpoint in which reality is seen as objective and measurable (Bruner, 1990; Sarbin, 1986).

The study was conducted in a framework of a narrative constructivism—a strand of narrative constructionist inquiry—which is based on the idea that life and identity are storied in nature. Narratives and life stories are seen as tools for perceiving and interpreting one's life. It assumes that an individual has an internal life-story mirroring the individual's mind: one's identity, feelings, sense of meaning in life, and ways of apprehending the past, present, and anticipated future. The inquiry focuses on an individual's

subjective meaning making and interpretations of his or her life. However, it acknowledges that the story is constructed in interaction with the individual's social environment and does not ignore relational issues (Sparkes & Smith, 2008).

Research Material and Participants

This study is a part of the After Reform School Study (ARSS) project, which has been described in more detail in previous ARSS publications (e.g., Lehti et al., 2015; Manninen et al., 2015). ARSS combines both quantitative and qualitative data of adolescents placed in RS during years 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011(N = 1074). ARSS is divided into three phases: a register-based study, an interview study, and intervention study. In this study, only the interview study research material is used. ARSS project began in 2012, and over the years the funding has been covered both by the state and also by personal grants. The methods and procedures of ARSS have been approved by the ethical committee of Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (documents from meetings in 2/2019, 1/2016, 9/2015 and 8/2011).

Participants from cohorts 2001 and 2006 were screened from the national register data in order to find RS adolescents with a stable adulthood condition. This condition was defined by an absence of adult-age criminal record and severe mental health problems (N = 109). We used relatively wide inclusion criteria for healthy adulthood condition, as previous findings have revealed that RS background is often associated with a wide array of adult age problems (Manninen et al., 2015, 2017, 2018). After screening the eligible participants, the RS personnel approached them by sending a letter in which the study was described and a permission for the researchers to contact the participants was requested. The final interviewees that all had been in RS (N = 30, 13 males, 17 females, age from 23 to 33 years) were chosen in the order in which their consent was received. They were placed in different RS while they were minors. The author MM conducted the interviews between autumn 2016 and spring 2017. We did not gather data of participants' race, as Finnish people are very homogenic in terms of race. For the final analysis we chose 13 interviews of those RS adolescents who have achieved a healthy adulthood condition (6 males, 7 females).

Analysis Procedure

The data was analyzed using a narrative constructivist method as a framework (Sparkes & Smith, 2008), and ideas from phenomenological psychology were also utilized in the analysis procedure (Perttula, 1995). Each stage was abductive in nature, i.e., research material and theoretical ideas were read and applied simultaneously. Theoretical ideas from the capability approach and narrative identity were used as a loose frame in the analysis, and all the researchers participated in the analysis process.

In first stage of the analysis procedure, first author wrote plot summaries of each interview, in which life events were put in a coherent order based on the three stages: life before reform school, life during it, and life after it. In the second stage, first author coded the research material based on elements of capabilities (senses of coherence, meaningfulness, belonging, and an experienced parity of participation) (Isola et al., 2020).

In the third stage, first author coded the research material based on narrative identities. Life-story constructs by McAdams and McLean (2013) were used as a framework in the analysis—The coding constructs found from the data were: agency, communion, redemption, contamination, meaning making, exploratory narrative processing, and a coherent positive resolution.

In the fourth stage, first and second author wrote summaries of the interviews based on how the relationship between capabilities and narrative identities appeared in different phases of the stories. In other words, the stories were written using researcher terminology. The idea was to describe the plot of the stories and then make a further analysis of each phase of the story. In the final stage, all the authors aimed to make connections between the stories and sort out the stories that reflected common features based on the used theoretical frameworks.

In the analysis, our aim was to bundle the interviews based on how thick they were in terms of theoretical frames used in the analysis, i.e. how often the adolescents' speech reflected a transition in narrative identity construct and interacted with their capabilities.

Finally, we found a story in which the theoretical elements we found from the research material were especially rich and thick and decided to present it as a case example of our findings—Anna's story. In other words, we made a general conclusion about all the cases and then decided together to present one case, which represents best the elements found from all the data, and retain original elements of adolescents' life-span and events in it (Strauss, 1987; Yin, 1987).

Ethical Considerations

The research data consist of interviews with young adults with a child welfare service background. This group has a history of challenging life episodes, which might cause uneasy feelings during the interview. The possible vulnerability of the participants was taken into account: where appropriate, the role of the interviewer was encouraging and strengthening (Roulston, 2010).

This research is ethically justified, as it aims to offer reliable data of protective factors against RS adolescents' adverse development. RS placement is described as an adolescent's second chance to change directions in life (Lehto-Salo, 2011), and focusing on positive development might produce tools for enhancing care in RS and also improve RS adolescents' prognosis for well-being in adulthood. The study protocol has been approved by the Ethical committee of Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (718/2015).

Findings

In the analysis, our aim was to bundle the interviews based on how thick they were in terms of theoretical frames used in the analysis, i.e., how often the participants' speech reflected a transition in each narrative identity construct and interacted with their capabilities. Once we had read all the interviews, coded them, wrote plot summaries using "researcher terminology", and made connections between the stories, we were able to decide which was the thickest story (Sulkunen & Egerer, 2009). In the findings section, we present an example of a story—Anna's story—in which the construction of the theoretical ideas were especially thick and rich. We chose Anna's interview as a case example as all the McAdam's and McLean's (2013) life-story constructs (i.e., identities) were presented in it. Additionally, inductive identities (i.e., problem youth identity) were visible in this story. Moreover, it clearly reflected how narrative identity and capability construction interacted.

Anna's Story

Life Before the RS Placement

Before the placement in RS, the narrator Anna attended elementary school although she actively skipped classes there. She describes herself through that problematic behavior. During the toughest phase she failed to pass the second year at school, which resulted in her not being able to move up to the third year of elementary school. At the same time, her dad was imprisoned, and her parents divorced, and she was taken first to a social welfare unit, and then placed in out-of-home care for the first time. The decision on the placement was made by her mother who could not control Anna's behavior, such as her problems in school and her "constant habit of wandering around with her friends without her mom knowing where she was". Capabilities during this life phase were limited, which also seemed to enhance the contamination identity described in McAdams and McLean's (2013) narrative identity terminology.

The placement in child welfare care reflects a tension between a voluntary choice and a forced one, which is a theme that can be pointed out throughout the story. At the end of the story Anna explains: "her mother *had to* do it." The tension was the same when her mother and sister had to leave her in involuntary psychiatric care. These situations reflect shared agency between Anna and her family members.

> So my mother had to do it, she could not take care of me and keep me, she had to leave me [to OOHC]… My mom took me to a social welfare office, left me there and said: "Do whatever you want for this, I don't want her to be at home anymore.

After the first placement, Anna was placed in multiple child welfare institutions, after which she was eventually placed in a reform school as the problems with running away continued.

Life During the RS Placement

One important reason for the RS placement was the social workers' concern to distance her from her friends, as they were considered to have a bad influence on her. At this point, Anna describes herself in rebellious terms:

> [I was] pretty fierce and also angry and rebellious against the RS stuff who took everything away from me, and which also increased the anger towards everything.

When a young person faces a coercive situation like OOHC placement, they have limited opportunities to act in a constructive way. From the capability approach viewpoint, capability is very limited/nonexistent, and as such, there is not much space to construct one's identity. Only the angry part seems to have a sufficient space for manifestation. The anger is especially visible in one incidence, in which Anna was held down by several adults due to a tantrum. During the confrontation, Anna sustained physical injuries like bruises. However, she decided to keep these injuries a secret, as she believed that if she would have complained about them, she would be punished more extensively, e.g., by cancelling her holidays at home. Moreover, this event shows Anna's minimal trust in adults.

Later, capabilities strengthened—Anna was allowed to visit home and her mother reconnected with her by promoting Anna's interests. The mother provided support by making an appointment for a doctor for Anna, and also by supporting Anna's interests by making a call to the RS personnel. Subsequently, the child welfare authorities decided that Anna did not have to return to RS.

However, the problems with her mother and the tantrums continued and she "was not able to make it" in school and was taken back into RS urgently. In those situations, a more problematic identity was present. From the age of eight to

the age of 14 Anna describes her life mostly through problems, and as such, we interpret that she is constructing an identity of a problem youth. The tantrums continued and became more intense:

> Adults were very careful with me and were afraid of keeping me calm… in order to protect me from violence.

The tantrums culminated in a more severe situation in which a teacher, a principal of the RS, a personal key-worker, a unit care worker, and another care worker who was even well-trained in martial arts, were all included. Finally, there were altogether eight adults who were only able to defuse the situation by rolling Anna in a matt and giving her a dose of tranquilizers.

Based on our interpretation, this was a turning point in Anna's life. She describes how other youth of the RS witnessed "her fiasco". Before this event Anna was bullied, but after this tantrum event, she describes that "nobody was able to say anything" to her. We interpret this to mean that she was describing herself through the agency identity. Anna's description of the event is in line with McAdams's and McLean's statement (2013) how agency identity is visible, when an individual is "able to change her own life or influence others in her environment, often through demonstration of self-mastery, empowerment, achievement, or status". Anna's capabilities strengthened together with her agency identity, even though these both seemed to manifest through negative and uncontrollable affections. At the same time, the narrative identity was growing in a more redemptive direction: Anna associates bullying with tantrums, which constructs redemption/meaning-making identity, in terms of McAdams and McLean (2013).

Despite these positive viewpoints, the tantrum event was also deeply humiliating. During the encounter, Anna lost both her temper but also her clothes, while the other RS adolescents were watching. However, the humiliation led to obstinacy and eventually Anna starts to think—also reflecting life-story construct of exploratory narrative processing:

> This kind of event appeared, how will I continue, how will get into a point in which these kinds of situations (tantrums) will not happen again. That life would get back to normal and I would get back to normal. Something must be done.

After this turning point, the tantrums occasionally continued but with lesser magnitude. Anna was provided help from a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and an occupational therapist. She was prescribed psychotropic medication.

Anna was allowed to move into family care due to her more proper behavior where she felt appreciated and cared for, and also made a close friend. This turning point seems to be meaningful in her life as she describes how her communion identity emerged:

> The best thing was that I was transferred into family care. I gained freedom and I was listened to, and I also made a friend with whom I was allowed to bustle around with and do stuff. So, it was probably the best moment, as in that moment I felt good.

She describes this moment only once, so we interpret it as Anna's attempt to construct an identity of a regular adolescent. Moving from the RS inpatient status to RS family care strengthened capability in her life. In practice, she was now able to visit in the village nearby, which also broadened the physical space in her life as well as redemption identity.

> It was kind of a shopping mall slash village where the regular adolescents living in the area hang out—I got that privilege as I handled things so well.

The phrase *where the regular adolescents living in the area hang out* stands out in the quote as it points out how Anna refers to herself as an atypical adolescent. Visiting the village also broadened her mental space and enhanced her mental well-being. Moreover, the capabilities strengthened as Anna got her own cell phone—which was not a common freedom given to an RS adolescent—constructing the redemption identity stronger.

> So I had a kind of wider freedom there. I was allowed to use the phone, and it helped me to feel good.

Anna graduated from elementary school and moved into her own first apartment according to a contract. She had significant people in her life that encouraged her to finish elementary school instead of stopping it due to the termination of compulsory education. This sort of stretching things out or honorably performing due to positive feedback strengthened Anna's capabilities and was an essential part of Anna's identity construction in terms of communion/meaning making identity:

> We made an agreement that if I am able to graduate from the elementary school, I would be able to move to my own place.

During the last years of RS Anna realized that she "had to behave and live properly and if she didn't, her life would be miserable". This reflects exploratory narrative proceeding in terms of McAdam's and McLean's (2013) life-story constructs. The most important strength she had was that her mental health was adequately taken care of, with a proper supportive network. As such, her life course seemed to lead to a more positive direction, reflecting her redemption identity:

I got this kind of supporting network for my mental health side.

While describing the time of her RS placement, there seems to be a tension: it seems that she was offered the identity of a child with no agency, and which she refused to take:

I was put in a position of a child. I was not listened to or supported to have been able to express myself better.

On the other hand, Anna expresses her need to be heard. At this point, capability and the construction of her agency identity went hand in hand. This theme is visible in the interview from time to time, already related to the first placement. Anna defines herself as a more rapidly developed child compared to other children as she had the ability to understand the choices and arguments related to her placement. She rationalizes her behavior by explaining that she had seen and experienced a lot during her life also constructing agency identity:

I've seen domestic violence … and I've been experienced violence.

Based on her harsh experiences, she criticizes the punishment practices in RS—e.g., taking the phone away, not allowed go home for holidays, being put in a room and the doors locked—that seemed unnecessary considering that she had seen a lot during her life.

Anna talked about "them"—"They" might be adults who understood her, and also equal people, as she describes when talking about her psychologists/psychiatrists/other professionals—which seems to strengthen her capabilities and communion identity:

They were listening to the young person. My psychologist and psychiatrist who worked there were listening to the young person, what she had to say, what she wanted and what she needed. It felt like I found the most important person; okay, she listens to what I want. So, it was like… I wanted to talk about my stuff to that person, what's wrong with me and how we could move forward. Like not saying from above *hey you, seriously, you have to tell us, we won't tell you, but you'll tell us*.

Life After Reform School

Anna left the RS when she was 17 years old. She returned to the municipal area she was born, after which she "had some difficulties but some easy times as well". An unstable life phase followed, and aftercare was not able to help Anna. Anna moved out of her own apartment to live with her boyfriend, and soon became pregnant. Her boyfriend was using drugs. Anna aborted the pregnancy with special permission, and subsequently left her boyfriend. She suffered medical complications from the abortion. Further difficult feelings led to self-destructive behavior and finally to a psychiatric department placement. At this point she describes the tension between freedom and force which reflects shared agency with Anna and mental health service providers:

We discussed that I am not forced into anything, but I can stay voluntarily if I want to, but the situation is not so bad that would I have to stay.

Anna left, but Anna's mother persuaded her to return to the department, after which a decision on involuntary psychiatric care was made. Anna became upset, and her identity turned to reflect a contamination identity:

I've been left here and you are abandoning me.

Throughout the story, there are multiple events in which the abandonment theme showed up. It seems that those situations were the ones in which capability shrank most noticeably and in which she identifies with a contamination identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Based on our interpretations, these situations reminded her of her childhood experiences when she had been left alone because of difficulties at home.

Anna's situation improved and she got out of the involuntary psychiatric care. In the interview, in numerous words she describes a sequence of events that we interpret as a turning point. This is a life phase during which she was driven away from her apartment due to the rent she did not pay. At the same time, she met a man from a different neighborhood, who seemed to be responsible—which was not a common trait among the people previously in her life. It seems that this relationship clearly strengthened capability in Anna's life as she talks about it during multiple times in the interview. It seems that she encountered somebody else than social secure system officials. Moreover, she "knuckled down" in order to finish the school she was attending. A few years later she found her becoming husband and acquired a family which reflects communion identity.

The story directs towards a coherent narrative resolution: Anna, "together with her husband", "investigated her life". She contacted the social welfare office and "printed out her whole child welfare history". Anna contacted the social welfare office and asked "the papers in black and white" and got them from childhood years until early adulthood." When talking about how to handle difficult situations on life, Anna often mentions her husband which reflects also communion identity:

Yes, and I've read them, and I've gone them through. There were difficult issues. There were issues that I had no idea about and me and my partner have gone through them. There were rough issues, but we've read

through them so that I could, as one could say, "go through my past".

The documents also revealed unknown facts about Anna's past that affected to the relationship between Anna and her mother. For example, related to her father who she did not know about.

In McAdams and McLean's (2013) terms, this narrative seems to have a coherent positive resolution, visible here as Anna describes:

> I've been grown as a person; there are many things in my life that are not currently so poor. For example, I most probably would have not been sitting here and gained control of my life. It could be as well that I'd be sitting on a street corner drinking beer and living on social benefits every day. That could be my case, and it could easily be that I wouldn't even had my own apartment or job or anything and I'd live on social benefits each and every day.

Coherent positive resolution is also visible as Anna reflects how listening to others and being mindful are her best skills. As her best resource, she names thinking and reflecting a lot, before making decisions on things. We interpret that this also as an important part of her meaning making identity. It is also visible here:

> So I've started to think like: what should I do and what should I not do? What will follow from my decisions? I've been always tried to look forward and to think: What will follow if I act like this?

Discussion

In this study, our aim was to investigate how former RS adolescents' narrative identity and capability construction interact in different phases of their life-stories. It seems that capabilities are closely related to RS adolescents' identity construction and well-being. The strengthened capability provides material for identity construction, particularly as to meaning making, agency, redemption, and communion. While, on the other hand, limited capabilities are related to the contamination identity, and also to more problematic identities such as a problem youth identity. Moreover, it is related to problems with identity construction. Our case example quite adequately reflect a coherent positive resolution for the time being.

Our findings point out, that strengthened capabilities enhance positive outcomes in the lives of marginalized groups. Similarly, Isola et al. (2020) found that lone mothers in the margins of society utilized multiple capabilities within the space of capabilities, when aiming to successfully raise their children to become good citizens, and as

such, managed to live a life in a socially valued way in the eyes of others.

In our research it seems that individuals' skills in meaning making strengthens capabilities, for example, when RS adolescent can be reflective and talk about her best skills and attributes despite the difficulties faced in life. Additionally, previous research has shown that an ability to attribute redemptive meanings while narrating adversities in one's life might correlate with mental health, well-being and maturity (McAdams & McLean, 2013; McAdams et al., 2001). These reflective skills are especially important for people in marginalized positions, such as among RS adolescents, and more broadly, OOHC adolescents (Drapeau et al., 2007; Niiranen et al., 2021). They might be also used as a way to resist a stigmatized identity (Känkänen & Bardy, 2014). We interpret that meaning making skills might be beneficial for OOHC adolescents, as they might strengthen capabilities and can be used to resist a stigmatized identity.

McAdams and McLean (2013) write: "narrators who find redemptive meanings in suffering and adversity, and who construct life stories that feature themes of personal agency and exploration, tend to enjoy higher levels of mental health, well-being, and maturity." The findings presented in this article support what McAdams and McLean (2013) have said, particularly when redemptive meanings strengthening capabilities and enhancing well-being go together in the stories. Also other studies on marginalized groups (i.e., prisoners) underline that when the narrators find redemptive meanings in their past, they may also address the old self with empathy (Maruna, 2001; Maruna & Ramsden, 2005). Moreover, studies of narrative accounts of personally meaningful episodes from people's past have shown how redemptive episodes are strongly correlated with self-reports of well-being (McAdams et al., 2001). It seems that a skill to find redemptive meanings in the stories of suffering and adversity might significantly enhance the subjective well-being of an individual, especially people with marginalized identities such as OOHC adolescents. We also interpret that individuals from harsh backgrounds could benefit from self-empathy.

There are multiple episodes in the stories where narrator of the story exert agency and possess an agency identity. In those situations, capabilities also start to strengthen. These are the situations, in which narrators often react to the negative life-events with active agency, such an episode where a narrator is bullied and starts to defend him or herself. Additionally previous studies have shown that OOHC adolescents' use of active agency might enhance their well-being (Jansen & Haavind, 2011; Niiranen et al., 2021; Schofield et al., 2017).

The community identity is an emergent theme in the stories, and it is clearly associated with strengthened capabilities. For example, after the placement, secure relationships

with romantic partners enhanced the communion identity of the narrators and strengthened capabilities noticeably in RS adolescents' lives. In contrast, when secure relationships were lacking, negative feelings and adversity were present. In those situations, RS adolescents often felt like they were abandoned. In those situations, capabilities were very limited or nonexistent, and more problematic identity constructs such as problem youth identity were present. These findings are in line with previous studies showing that OOHC adolescents' stable and trusting relationships might strengthen their sense of security, permanence and belonging (Schofield et al., 2017). These healthy relationships also seem to increase their resilience and better coping after the placement in care (Drapeau et al., 2007; Niiranen et al., 2021; Schofield et al., 2017), and enhance successful transition to independence (Brisson et al., 2020). We find that a community identity together with strengthened capabilities are essential for OOHC adolescents' well-being.

In most stories in our research, there is a coherent positive resolution. The tensions in the story are solved and a relatively positive ending is achieved (McAdams & McLean, 2013). This matches other studies on OOHC adolescents, emphasizing how coping after the placement is associated with self-narratives with relatively positive endings in which the individual and others are seen in a positive light, although problems in the past are recognized (Schofield et al., 2017).

A central contribution of our study is that it shows how RS adolescents' identity construction and capabilities often go hand in hand, strengthening capabilities while enhancing more positive identities. This also seems to clearly contribute to RS adolescents' well-being and coping during and after the RS placement. Moreover, this study shows that strengthened capabilities and more positive identities can be used as a way to resist the stigma associated with marginalized identities.

Limitations and Implications

A limitation of this study is the restricted sample size, however, the methodological approach used in the study does not intend to find an objective truth, but rather, aims to understand an individual's mind, including how identity and a sense of meaning in life are constructed in the narrator's own words (Sparkes & Smith, 2008). In the future, our aim will be to study interventions that could strengthen marginalized groups' capabilities and enhance the construction of more positive identities.

Based on the findings of our study we recommend, that OOHC adolescents' capabilities should be strengthened in order to support their narrative identity work. In addition to traditional care methods for identity work like psychotherapy, other constructive activities such as sports (Appelqvist-chmidlechner et al., 2021) and art-based methods (Känkänen & Bardy, 2014) have also been shown to be effective. All in all, it seems essential to offer for the adolescent a safe environment to narrate their own experiences as part of their history, current moment as well as future expectations and dreams. Based on our results we state as a conclusion that stable and trusting relationships are essential in the life-path of RS adolescents as they strengthen capabilities and help develop feelings of meaningfulness, belonging, experienced parity of participation and senses of coherence.

Declarations

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