

ePrints - Better Outcomes Institutional Repository

Matheson, I. (2016). The importance of individual personal factors: The experiences of care leavers who went to university [Special issue]. *Developing Practice*, 46, 42-54.

ePrints is designed to allow users to access the research output of the Research Centre for Better Outcomes from Residential and Foster Care, conference presentations, and material accepted for publication in books and journals. The version below may differ from a published version. Copyright and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. You may not engage in further distribution of the material for any profitmaking activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the content of this paper for research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL PERSONAL FACTORS: THE EXPERIENCES OF CARE LEAVERS WHO WENT TO UNIVERSITY

Dr Iain Matheson, Director

Research Centre for Better Outcomes from Fostering and Residential Care, New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

With the recent launch of the *Home Stretch* campaign (<http://www.thehomestretch.org.au>), several new and important Australian and New Zealand publications (for example, Deloitte Access Economics, 2016; Mendes & Snow, 2016; Modernising Child, Youth and Family Expert Panel, 2015; Murray, 2015), and the New Zealand Government's decision to enact legislation to extend the (foster) care leaving age to 21 (Office of the Minister of Social Development, 2016), the focus upon the needs of Australasian care leavers has arguably never been stronger. Completing schooling and engaging in post-secondary education and/or training, are also widely recognised as having a critical role to play in many or most care leavers' achieving better outcomes (Courtney, Dworsky, Brown, Love, & Vorhies, 2011; Jackson & Cameron, 2012, 2014; Stein, 2006).

Slipping down Ladders and Climbing up Snakes (Matheson, 2015), is a doctoral study that investigated the experiences of New Zealand university students who were formerly in out-of-home care (OOHC). The study's high level findings were that: *Kiwi kids in care* can and do go on to university; being in OOHC helped some participants get to university but hindered others; distinct patterns across experiences were found as well as some similarities with others in residential and foster care; and, as suggested by the thesis title of *Slipping down Ladders and Climbing up Snakes*, life in, and transitioning from, OOHC is complex with some circumstances and events having unintended consequences for participants—both negative and positive.

This article specifically addresses the study's findings in relation to individual personal factors such as participants' feelings, motivation, and views and attitudes, as well as an additional finding in relation to serendipity and acts of generosity. Possible practice implications are also discussed. Findings on education experiences (Matheson, 2016b), care and transitioning from care experiences (Matheson, 2016a) and experiences of family, friends, partners, and community (Matheson, 2016c) are reported elsewhere.

BACKGROUND

Research interest in the education of children and young people in OOHC, and that of OOHC-experienced adults, has been growing steadily over the last 30 years. As well as in the United Kingdom, North America, and the Nordic countries, there is now a reasonably significant body of Australasian research on this topic (for example, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007, 2011; Cashmore, Paxman, & Townsend, 2007; Cavanagh, 1996; CREATE, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006; de Lemos, 1997; Harvey, McNamara, Andrewartha, & Luckman, 2015; Jurczynszyn & Tilbury, 2012; Matheson, 2014; Michell, 2012; Michell, Jackson, & Tonkin, 2015; Sutherland, 2006, 2008; Townsend, 2011; Wise, Pollock, Mitchell, Argus, & Farquhar, 2010; Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland, 2011).

More recently, a small number of overseas studies of care leavers who go to university have been conducted. These studies suggest that such individuals are likely to: be female (e.g., Jackson & Ajayi, 2007; Jackson, Ajayi & Quigley, 2005; Merdinger, Hines, Osterling, & Wyatt, 2005); have, or perceive that they have, some particular personal attributes such as being especially motivated, determined and persistent (e.g., Jackson & Ajayi, 2007; Jackson et al., 2005; Rios & Rocco, 2014); identify as being resilient or educationally resilient (e.g., Mendis, 2012; Merdinger et al., 2005); and in some countries be members of certain non-white ethnic groups (Finnie, 2012; Jackson & Ajayi, 2007; Jackson et al., 2005). Although findings on whether such students have a similar background to others in care, and how their pathways into care compare, have been variable (e.g., Bryderup & Trentel, 2011; Jackson & Ajayi, 2007; Jackson et al., 2005; Jackson & Cameron, 2012), we do know more about the range of barriers that students with a care background face while they are studying.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This study uses constructivism as its research paradigm. Seeking to understand the experiences of participants rather than explain them, the use of constructivism reflected and shaped: how I saw and valued participants' experiences and realities; how I engaged with participants and saw and performed my role as researcher; my methodological assumptions and choice of methods ; and my views on how quality in such studies should be judged i.e. credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, 1989).

In terms of methodology, while not an example of phenomenological research per se, in exploring the lived experiences of participants, the design and development of this study was influenced by more constructivism-orientated phenomenological research (for example, Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). However, I have adopted Mertens' position that '*qualitative is a type of methodology*' (Mertens, 2010, p. 8), and so the methodology is more broadly characterised as qualitative. The primary data collection method was in-depth face-to-face interviews using Patton's '*informal conversational interview*' (Patton 2002). With a strong focus upon participants' stories, this form of interviewing is largely unstructured, flexible and interactive, with questions arising from the immediate context. These face-to-face interviews were followed up with a second interview some weeks later by telephone. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used as the data analysis method.

RESEARCH PROCESS

Participant recruitment

The most successful participant recruitment method was directly contacting child welfare organisations. Other successful methods were indirectly approaching previous recipients of an award for children in care, use of a New Zealand research participant website, and through my own professional networks.

Participants

The inclusion criteria were current degree students or graduates aged between 17 and 29 who, since their 14th birthday, had spent a year (not necessarily continuously) or more in the care or custody of the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development and/or a government-approved organisation. However, 17 year olds who were still in the care or custody of the Chief Executive were excluded from the study.

Seven participants took part. Participants lived in three New Zealand cities. With one exception all were female. At the time of their face-to-face interview they were aged between 18 and 26 years. Their ethnicities were (New Zealand) European, Māori, Pacific Peoples, and Asian. Foster care and non-kin placements were by far the predominant form of OOHC they had experienced. In terms of the length of time spent in care, four participants came into care as teenagers and remained in care until they were discharged to live independently, two were intermittently in and out of care throughout their childhood, and one came into care as a teenager and then returned to live with her family. Most of their families valued education. Only one participant could be considered to have experienced a permanent foster care placement; most had multiple placements of varying quality. Most, but not all, reported that while they were in OOHC, they had at times presenting one or more behavioural challenges to their carers e.g. truanting from school, absconding, offending, misusing alcohol and drugs, anger management issues, and self-harm. They each attended between one and three secondary schools. When the fieldwork was undertaken, one participant had already graduated with a bachelor's degree and the other six were undergraduates.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study was approved by the University of Otago's Human Ethics Committee. Beyond participants being care leavers, there were some particular ethical considerations around maintaining the anonymity of participants given that so very few New Zealand care leavers appear to go to University, and some proposed limits on the use of information publicly available on the internet for recruiting study participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Five inter-related personal factor themes are presented and discussed as follows: (1) feeling cared for, and cared about; (2) school and belonging; (3) wanting a different kind of future; (4) having a sense of resilience; and, (5) serendipity and acts of generosity. The conceptualisation and understanding of care leavers and their care and education experiences were underpinned and shaped by the theoretical perspectives of the children's rights movement (for example, Freeman, 1998), ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), resilience theory (for example, Ungar, 2004) and cultural capital theory (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986). The use of theory in research helps us both to understand and to explain (Mutch, 2013). These four theoretical perspectives : recognise the importance of relationships with other people and institutions, and their broader context; share several similarly framed key concepts, for example agency, competence, ecology, systems and experiences; and can be applied to improving the life circumstances of children and young adults. As 'middle range theories' (Walford, 2001), the children's rights movement, ecological systems theory, resilience theory and cultural capital theory, also informed some of my responses and questions during the interviews, and how I interpreted the data and explained the findings.

1: Feeling Cared for and Cared About

All but one of the participants indicated that as university students they had, as well as any partners, at least one other adult who they felt really cared about them and what they did; they did not feel that they were alone in the world. These adults were also supportive of their education. While this certainly included some parents and extended family members, familial relationships tended to be rather complex; more commonly such individuals were either their final foster carers, or previous foster carers with whom they had remained in touch. These foster carers were talked about with a great deal of warmth and affection, and the ongoing connections for each participant were clearly important. Having officially left foster care years ago and having recently graduated, one of the participants stated that:

They [my final placement foster carers] come over for dinner and I go over there, so its good...and I'm still in touch with the caregivers at the family home [small residential unit run by a couple who are foster carers) as well which is really good.

However, whilst in OOHC another participant found the notion of being cared for and cared about rather overwhelming; he rejected a potentially nurturing relationship with one set of foster carers and sabotaged his placement. Afterwards, he vowed '*not to make that same mistake again*'. Interestingly, after he had left OOHC, he was able to re-connect with this foster family and live with them again before going off to university:

I felt strongly part of the family and we build a really strong relationship. I am still kind of part of the family and we still do – I can go up there for my holidays [from University]. They are religious but pretty cool people.

Conversely, for the participant who said that she did not feel that she currently had such a relationship with another adult, motivating herself to do well in her university papers was reported to be a real challenge, as she felt that she did not really have anyone to tell about her academic achievements.

The importance of feeling cared for and cared about by at least one adult is consistent with a number of studies about care leavers going to university (e.g., Jackson et al., 2005; Merdinger et al., 2005; Rios & Rocco, 2014). From resilience theory, this can be seen as a protective factor, while from ecological systems theory, children can derive beneficial relationships with individuals who are not necessarily part of their biological families, whether that be foster carers, teachers, partners or friends.

2: School and belonging

The importance of their (final) secondary school and the strong sense of belonging that participants derived from it, was a theme that came up again and again and was discussed by all but one participant. The sense of purpose, identity or social support that participants got from secondary school, whether it was from friends, trusted adults or the institution more generally, took on a particular significance. For most, this positive sense of belonging at school strongly contrasted with their experience of being in OOHC. One participant was particularly adamant that '*the only stable thing in my life – was school*'. Most participants, although not all, had a similar sense of belonging at University.

Some participants talked about secondary school in terms of just wanting to be ‘ordinary’ and ‘fitting in’. As one participant put it:

I didn't have that much desire to be like a 'brainy' person like – I just wanted to be normal. You know some kids at school always just want to be the best, you know, be the smartest and that sort of thing – I didn't mind if I wasn't the smartest...I was happy just being the norm.

For these participants, the idea of their going to university came as they and their friends progressed through the latter stages of school and passed their examinations. However, some other participants saw school as a place to be extraordinary rather than ordinary—they were motivated by competition and achieving academically. Another participant shared:

I would [in my last foster care placement] actually sit up and cry over 80% or 85%...she [my foster carer] didn't understand, and I know how vain that sounds, I truly do, because even now at Uni I will get so disappointed when I get an A minus...I would be so pissed off – the whole day...it's actually not good enough if you don't get A pluses. Everything else is a fail, because if you think about it, yes B plus is better than C, but it is pretty much the same thing.

Resilience theory suggests that experiencing school as a place of belonging can be an important protective factor for children. One particularly interesting aspect of this study is that all six of the participants who completed secondary schooling viewed their final school as a good school; this is somewhat different from the overseas literature (Jackson et al., 2005; O'Sullivan & Westerman, 2007). Again, given the cultural capital that many of these participants possessed and the comparative stability and instability of their secondary schooling and foster care placements respectively, this is perhaps not surprising.

3: Wanting a Different Kind of Future

Most participants articulated that they wanted a different kind of life to the one that they had either previously experienced or, in view of their backgrounds, were likely to experience; they saw education as a means to achieve a new life. However, they tended to express this in a variety of different ways.

While one participant talked about *'doing well in school as an easy way to get better opportunities'*, another put this in much stronger terms:

As a child I have experienced and witnessed things [that I shouldn't have] ... Throughout my childhood I have lived with a wide range of families including some wealthy ones. This has given me insights into both the value of education and the possibility of having a life that is different to the one that my beneficiary mother has – no disrespect to her.

While another participant talked of sometimes feeling that she was *'sick of doing nothing exciting'* with her life, and her boyfriend once saying that she had a lack of aspirations, the different kind of future that she described was primarily for her son. Although a few years ago, she declared that during her pregnancy she could still clearly recall thinking:

I'm going to have a baby and need to be able to provide for it, I can't work in cafés for the rest of my life, and can't provide a very good life for him without a proper education of some kind.

After the birth of her child, she rejoined her tertiary course the following year and went on to gain her first educational qualification. This, and her subsequent employment history, enabled her to go to university as a mature student.

The finding that participants saw education as a means of getting a different kind of future for themselves is also consistent with findings from the studies of care leavers referred to earlier (Jackson et al., 2005; Merdinger et al., 2005; Rios & Rocco, 2014). Cultural capital theory also highlights that parents who value education, tend to instil this in their children from an early age.

4: Having a sense of resilience

As well as their feelings about the circumstances that led to their coming into OOHC, several participants talked about a strong sense of loss, and some still carried a feeling of being rejected by their parents, and particularly their mothers. Some also related that they had been ashamed about being in care. Over time all had also lost or changed important relationships with siblings, extended family members, foster carers, teachers and friends, and in some instances also the town or suburb where they had been raised, and aspects of their culture. As one participant put it:

It was real hard for me at the time. I had lost my family and then I lost my friends and so okay it was what do I have to live for, do you know what I mean? [At my old school] I was like the perfect person with the grades...I was learning two languages, I was awesome. My family were good...I had friends, I was popular, everybody liked me.

However, almost all participants saw themselves as resilient individuals. They each recognised that they had been able to cope with a series of stressful and potentially disabling series of events and circumstances during their lives. They also realised that such a coping ability was not necessarily very common for individuals with a care background. Participants portrayed a sense of awareness about some of their personal values, attributes, skills or knowledge that may have contributed to such resilience and their educational success to date. Factors identified by different participants included having: a positive outlook; a belief in oneself; a focus and determination; self-care and self-management skills; relationship skills, and social justice values.

For most, their resilience was most clearly apparent in relation to their education. As well as the protective factor of seeing school and university as places of belonging, participants had a positive view of their teaching and learning environments, and generally had little difficulty with their coursework (Waxman, Gray & Padron, 2003). For some, education was also a sphere of their life where they had a sense of control or even mastery.

However, such 'educational resilience' (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1994) was not necessarily demonstrated to the same extent across all areas of their lives. As care leavers, some participants had sometimes found themselves in situations where they were struggling to cope with strong negative feelings about past events, relationships and themselves. Most also indicated that they were continuing to face a high degree of adversity in their lives. Two commonly identified issues were financial difficulties and finding affordable accommodation.

The finding that participants believed themselves to be resilient individuals has also been found in other studies (e.g., Rios & Rocco, 2014). Similarly, that the resilience that some participants demonstrated in relation to their education was not necessarily exhibited across other areas of their lives, has also been found elsewhere (Merdinger et al., 2005). However, while mainstream resilience theory highlights a range of risk and protective factors, Ungar's () description of resilience as being '*chaotic, complex, relative and contextual*' (Ungar, 2004, p. 341) is a better fit with the lives of most participants.

5: Serendipity, and acts of generosity

No one who has experienced abuse, neglect, inadequate parental care, or a fragmented childhood could in any sense be described as 'lucky'. However, most of the participants identified one or more serendipitous events or relationships that had assisted them on their pathway to tertiary education; these went beyond simply having a good relationship with a particular teacher, foster carer or social worker. For example, a middle school teacher discovering that one of the participants, whose primary education had been marked by his disruptive, and at times violent, behaviour, had been taught by a kin foster carer to play chess to a high level; with her support he went on to come second in a national school chess competition, and through that fully engaged with his schooling:

What I didn't realise, was how good my uncle was...because when I got to intermediate [middle] school, I was beating everyone left, right and centre and even the teachers, and everyone...the teachers were amazed...And then they entered me into a chess competition for [city] – and then I won that easily... And so I won that and then I went to the nationals and I got second – cos I got beat by New Zealand's best. But I was pretty happy about it.

Other serendipitous events or relationships included:

- One participant who had no choice but to take two examination subjects that she was particularly poor at because she was enrolled at a new school two weeks late, being partly mitigated by the fact that another girl (later to become a firm friend) who happened to be good at these subjects, also started with her on the same day.
- Another participant with significant school attendance issues being placed with a foster carer who also happened to administer the student attendance system at the local secondary school that she would transfer to.
- A friendship at school leading to one participant flatting with her friend's sister when she was discharged from care, and then subsequently living with this friend's family on and off ever since.

However, perhaps more surprising is that two of the participants, faced with the prospect of their placements breaking down, reported that they were offered, and took up, the opportunity to live with senior school staff. As one of them stated:

I was "...I might as well quit high school and just start making money... I'm going to be out of the social welfare system soon so I might as well set myself up with a job." And then one of the teachers, she was "na, na, na – you need to stay at school – get your education." And so she must have gone to the staffroom or something and told people, or might've just trusted this deputy principal...she was like an ex-foster carer...she was also my physics teacher. And so she didn't want me to go and so she offered for me to temporarily stay there until CYF [Child, Youth and Family] found me a placement.

Without these offers, one of the participants would have left school and in all probability not gone on to university, while the other was facing the prospect of having to leave a school in which she was happy, settled, and doing very well. While the notion of 'education as a lottery' is sometimes used in the media, findings in relation to serendipity and generosity have not been specifically identified in other similar studies overseas. For these to feature so prominently with so many of the participants suggests that for these participants, the current systems did not work sufficiently well. Surely such young people should not have to rely upon serendipity or luck in order to progress to university?

POSSIBLE PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Irrespective of what future provisions for care leavers or policies and programs to support the education of children and young people in OOHC are put in place in Australian states and New Zealand, if more young people left care believing that they were cared for and cared about, and had aspirations and a strengthened sense of belonging and resilience, lives could and would be transformed. While policy (and funding) have an important part to play here, this is very much the domain of practice. A focus on such individual personal factors may be even more important when the quality of OOHC is not high.

The finding of serendipity and acts of generosity suggests the importance of practitioners looking out for, and acting upon, appropriate opportunities for those that they work with in OOHC, and that unintended consequences need not always be negative. It also highlights that for young people in OOHC, planning and preparation for university are often anything but linear and controllable processes.

Finally, the findings also serve as a timely reminder that all children and young people are unique individuals with their own feelings, motivations, views, and attitudes. If we are to see better education outcomes from OOHC, the central role of children, young people and care leavers themselves, and the interplay with and between such factors, also needs to be fully recognised.

CONCLUSION

This study's findings on individual personal factors suggest a range of particular and strong patterns in the experiences of these particular New Zealand participants with an OOHC background who went to university, which may be relevant to others. As well as serendipitous events and acts of generosity, other findings included participants feeling cared for or cared about, wanting a different kind of future, viewing secondary school and university as places of belonging and stability, and having a sense of educational resilience. Irrespective of whether participants believed that having an OOHC background had helped or hindered them in getting to university, such individual personal factors had a significant role to play in the educational success of all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I'd like to acknowledge my doctoral supervisors, the late Emeritus Professor Anne Smith and Dr. Gill Rutherford, for comments on earlier article drafts, as well as their support throughout the course of my doctorate. This article has been produced with the assistance of the University of Otago's Postgraduate Publishing Bursary.

REFERENCES

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2007). *Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders: A pilot study*. Canberra, Australia: Author.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2011). *Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders: A pilot study, Stage 2*. Canberra, Australia: Author.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Power and ideology in education* (pp. 487-510). Oxford, England: Oxford University.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook for theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York, NY: Greenwood.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Bryderup, I., & Trental, M. (2011). Denmark. In S. Jackson & C. Cameron (Eds.), *Final report of the YiPPEE project* [YiPPEE report WP 12] (pp. 20-33). London, England: Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.
- Cashmore, J., Paxman, M., & Townsend, M. (2007). The educational outcomes of young people 4-5 years after leaving care: An Australian perspective. *Adoption & Fostering* 31(1), 50-61. doi:10.1177/030857590703100109
- Cavanagh, J. (1996). *Getting an education in care*. Melbourne, Australia: Kildonan Child and Family Services.
- Courtney, M. E., Dworsky, A., Brown, C., Love, K., & Vorhies, V. (2011). *Midwest evaluation of adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
- CREATE Foundation (2001). *Australian children and young people in care: Report card on education*. Coorparoo, Australia: Author.
- CREATE Foundation (2002). *Australian children and young people in care: Report card on education*. Coorparoo, Australia: Author.
- CREATE Foundation. (2003). *Report card on education*. Sydney, Australia: Author.
- CREATE Foundation. (2004). *Report card on education*. Sydney, Australia: Author.
- CREATE Foundation. (2006). *Report card on education*. Sydney, Australia: Author.
- De Lemos, M. (1997). *Educational needs of children in care: Report on a research study of children in residential and home based care*. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Council of Education Research.
- Deloitte Access Economics. (2016). *Raising our children: Guiding young Victorians in care into adulthood*. Retrieved from https://www.anglicarevic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Raising-Our-Children_Guiding-Young-Victorians-in-Care-into-Adulthood.pdf
- Finnie, R. (2012). Access to post-secondary education: The importance of culture. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 1161-1170.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Harvey, A., McNamara, P., Andrewartha, L., & Luckman, M. (2015). *Out of care, into university: Raising higher education access and achievement of care leavers*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Out-of-Care-Into-University.pdf>
- Jackson, S., & Ajayi, S. (2007). Foster care and higher education. *Adoption & Fostering*, 31(1), 62-72. doi:10.1177/030857590703100110
- Jackson, S., Ajayi, S., & Quigley, M. (2005). *Going to university from care: Final report – By Degrees project*. London, England: Institute of Education.
- Jackson, S., & Cameron, C. (2012). Leaving care: Looking ahead and aiming higher. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 34(6), 1107-1114.
- Jurczyszyn, R., & Tilbury, C. (2012). Higher and further education for care leavers. A road less travelled. *Developing Practice*, 33, 10-22.
- Matheson, I. (2014). *Education provision for learners in Child, Youth and Family Residences*. Unpublished research report for the New Zealand Ministry of Education.
- Matheson, I. (2015). *Slipping down ladders and climbing up snakes: The educational experiences of young adults who were in foster care* (Unpublished EdD thesis). Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago.

- Matheson, I. (2016a). *Care and transitioning from care: The experiences of care leavers who went to university*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Matheson, I. (2016b). *Education: The experiences of care leavers who went to university*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Matheson, I. (2016c). *Family, partners, friends and communities: The experiences of care leavers who went to university*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Mendes, P., & Snow, P. (Eds.). (2016). *Young people transitioning from out-of-home care: International research, policy and practice*. London, England: Palgrave MacMillian.
- Mendis, K. (2012). Exploring ways in which to support the education of children in care. *Developing Practice*, 33, 26-34.
- Merdinger, J. A., Hines, A. M., Osterling, K. L., & Wyatt, P. (2005). Pathways to college for former foster youth: Understanding factors that contribute to educational success. *Child Welfare*, 84(6), 867- 896.
- Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Michell, D. (2012). *A suddenly desirable demographic? Care leavers in higher education*. *Developing Practice* 33, 44-58.
- Michell, D., Jackson, D., & Tonkin, D. (2015). *Against the odds. Care leavers at university*. Elizabeth, South Australia: People's Voice Publishing.
- Modernising Child, Youth and Family Expert Panel. (2015). *Expert panel final report: Investing in New Zealand's children and their families*. Retrieved from <http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/investing-in-children/investing-in-children-report.pdf>
- Murray, S. (2015). *Supporting adult care-leavers*. Bristol, England: Policy Press.
- Mutch, C. (2013). *Doing education research* (2nd ed.). Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER.
- Office of the Minister of Social Development. (2016). *Investing in children legislative reform: Underpinning the new operating model [New Zealand Government Cabinet Social Policy Committee paper]*. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/investing-in-children/cabinet-paper-transition-18-21.pdf>
- O'Sullivan, A., & Westerman, R. (2007). Closing the gap: Investigating the barriers to educational achievement for looked after children. *Adoption and Fostering*, 31(1), 13-20. doi: 10.1177/030857590703100104
- Patton, M. J. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rios, S. J., & Rocco, T. S. (2014). From foster care to college: Barriers and supports on the road to postsecondary education. *Emerging Adulthood*, 2(3), 227-237. doi:10.1177/2167696814526715
- Rushdie, S. (1981). *Midnight's children*. London, England: Vintage.
- Stein, M. (2006). Leaving care, education and career trajectories. *Oxford Review of Education*, 20(3), 349-350. doi:10.1080/0305498940200308
- Sutherland, A. (2006). *From classroom to prison cell: Young offenders' perception of their school experience* (Unpublished PhD thesis). Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University Wellington.
- Sutherland, A. (2008). *Classroom to prison cell* (2nd ed.). Whanganui, New Zealand: Stead and Daughters.

- Townsend, M. (2011). *Are we making the grade? The education of children and young people in out-of-home care* (Unpublished PhD thesis). Lismore, New South Wales: Southern Cross University.
- Ungar, M. (2004). *Nurturing hidden resilience in troubled youth*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto.
- Walford, G. (2001). *Doing qualitative educational research*. London, England: Continuum.
- Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1994). Educational resilience in inner cities. In M. C. Wang & E. Gordon (Eds.), *Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects* (pp. 45-72). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Waxman, H. C., Gray, J. P., & Padron, Y. N. (2003). *Review of research on educational resilience*. Houston, TX: Centre for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.
- Wise, S., Pollock, S., Mitchell, G., Argus, C., & Farquhar, P. (2010). *CIAO: Care system impacts on academic outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.pcafamilies.org.au/uploaded-files/2010_CIAO_report1_1326688797.pdf
- Working Group on Education for Children and Young People in Out-of-home Care in Queensland. (2011). *Education matters: A call for action to improve educational participation, retention and attainment for children and young people in care in Queensland*. Retrieved from <http://www.youthplus.edu.au/images/docs/EducationMattersReport.pdf>