I did not get a Background. Do you think I could have a Future?

A qualitative study on caretakers presumptions of the future regarding the children living in orphanages in Poland

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the caretakers of polish orphanages presumptions regarding the future of the children they are working with, there are two research questions, one of them questions if the caretakers presumptions regarding the children they are working widths future after the transition from the orphanage could be considered as positive or negative. The other question is if the caretakers believe that their positive or negative presumptions could affect the children’s own presumptions about their future.

I have been using qualitative method and performed four interviews with female caretakers working in a polish orphanage. The study was based on hermeneutics and phenomenology and to analyse my data I have been using an ecological perspective and the life model.

The results show that the caretaker’s presumptions regarding the children’s future after the transition could be considered as negative. And it is also concluded that the caretakers do not believe that their presumptions could affect the children’s own presumptions but will take the question formulation into consideration.

Keywords: Poland, Orphanage, orphan, caretaker, presumptions, transition
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Thank you!
Therese Borglund
# Table of contents

1. Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.2 Coupling to social work ................................................................................................. 2
   1.3 Formulation of the problem ............................................................................................ 3
   1.4 Aim ................................................................................................................................. 3
   1.5 Research questions .......................................................................................................... 3
   1.6 Disposition ....................................................................................................................... 3
   1.7 Explanation of concepts ................................................................................................. 4
2. Background ............................................................................................................................ 4
   2.1 Previous research ............................................................................................................. 5
   2.2 Preliminary understanding .............................................................................................. 7
   2.3 The orphanage ................................................................................................................. 8
   2.4 The transition from the orphanage .................................................................................. 8
3 Coupling to theory .................................................................................................................. 9
   3.1 Ecosystem perspectives ................................................................................................. 9
   3.2 The life model ................................................................................................................ 10
   3.3 Self fulfilling-prophecy ............................................................................................... 11
4. Methodology .......................................................................................................................... 11
   4.1 Mode of procedure ......................................................................................................... 11
   4.2 Sample ............................................................................................................................ 12
   4.3 Philosophy of science and analysis ............................................................................... 13
   4.4 Ethical Considerations ................................................................................................. 14
   4.5 Reliability, validity ........................................................................................................ 15
5. Results .................................................................................................................................... 16
   5.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 16
   5.2 A hard world ................................................................................................................. 16
   5.3 Being honest ................................................................................................................... 18
   5.4 Presumptions that affect ............................................................................................... 21
   5.6 Analysis of “a hard world” ........................................................................................... 22
   5.7 Analysis of “being honest” ............................................................................................. 23
   5.8 Analysis of “presumptions that affect” ......................................................................... 24
   5.9 Holistic analysis ............................................................................................................. 25
6. Discussion .............................................................................................................................. 27
   7.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 27
   7.2 Results ............................................................................................................................ 27
   7.3 The mode of procedure ................................................................................................. 28
   7.4 Connection to earlier results ......................................................................................... 29
   7.5 Limitations and future research .................................................................................... 30
List of references ..................................................................................................................... 31
   Literature ............................................................................................................................. 31
   Articles/Essays .................................................................................................................... 31
   Web pages ............................................................................................................................ 32
Appendix – Interview guide .................................................................................................... 34
1. Introduction

The fact that there are such a huge number of children and adolescent that is living as, and becoming orphans everyday is an issue that are lying very close to my heart, and that is why I chose to make a deeper analysis in this research area.

In my past I have been organizing and been on many relief consignments as well as I have been working as a volunteer in many different orphanages. All of the orphanages were situated in Eastern Europe and this made me interested in conducting my study in that part of the world.

I personally believe that researched performed in the developed part of the world could be very beneficial for the developing world as we have the opportunity and should, according to me, take advantage of the fact that this part of the world lays one step ahead, and decrease the risk that the developing world will make the same mistakes as the developed world have already done and might still be doing today.

I also believe that if we could ensure what a good children’s impact includes and find the best ways of dealing with orphaned children and their lives as soon as possible we could give better help to the developing countries in their development as well as eradicate mistreatments everywhere. This will give the appropriate help to the most amounts of children living in orphanages everywhere as soon as possible.

I had trouble choosing what country to do research in and my first choice was Russia or Ukraine as they have such a high number of children that are either deprived of parental care or orphans in their societies, furthermore it was quite easy to find contacts there as there are many children from Ukraine got the chance to live in Swedish families during the summers after the Chernobyl disaster.

In the end, due to some plan changes and some reflection I went to Poland. This decision was made out of two reasons, one because I have lots of contacts and a broad pre – understanding of the situation in a polish orphanage as I have been working in one for eight months as well as I have basic understanding of the polish language.

The other reason is because Poland is located close to countries like Sweden which no longer have a need of orphanages as they have so few children who are in care of the state and at the same time has such developed laws that protect the children one of them for example conclude that children must reside in a family home
I will concentrate on the attitudes and visions of the future the caretakers have on the children they are working with. My interest in the caretaker’s vision for the children’s future is embedded in the apparition that their vision is affecting the children’s vision of their own futures – labelling them - and might also influence what will actually happen to them. There is a risk that social systems could label you and there is a probability that the labelled person feel pressured to live up to the expectations of his or her label. Social systems could also create self-fulfilling prophecies that could lead orphaned children to negative life patterns. Therefore I believe that this is an important area of study and an important question to be answered. It will also open up for consideration if there is a need to empower caretakers to change their visions of the future for the sake of the children.

I wanted to locate different stressors facing the orphaned children’s lives to see in what direction I wanted to aim my study in. Aside from unpredictable life stressors that could affect anyone I have detected three major life stressors that are predictable, and will affect children that end up in orphanages
1. When they are becoming orphaned
2. When they are adapting to an orphanage
3. When they are transitioned from the orphanage
I have chosen to concentrate on only one of these three areas which is number three, the transition. I made this choice because it is in this state where the children need to leave their secure environment and all their contacts to enter a whole new life. I concentrated my research on views of the caretakers as they have close relation with both the children’s secure environment in the orphanage as well as with the outside world.

1.2 Coupling to social work

Social work is mainly concentrating on improving quality of life for individuals, groups, communities and society. Social workers also often tend to put focus on the weakest, most exposed and vulnerable people in society. I think my research area has a stable coupling to Social work as these children are one of the most vulnerable and exposed groups in our whole society; they are growing up in social institutions and are in a risk group of developing a bad quality of life.
1.3 Formulation of the problem

I believe that the outcomes of letting children grow up in an orphanage should get more attention as there are so many children in the world who has, will and are going through this. As parents often are the persons that truly believe in and are encouraging their children I believe that it is of importance that children growing up in orphanages also need a person/persons who do that. And I want to explore if the support given could be considered as sufficient.

1.4 Aim

The aim is to explore if the caretakers’ presumptions regarding the future of the children after the transition from an orphanage is positive or negative including if they believe that heir presumptions could affect the children’s own presumptions regarding their future, using qualitative method and an ecological perspective.

1.5 Research questions

*Could the caretakers of a polish orphanage presumption regarding the children’s future after the transition from the orphanage be considered as positive or negative?*

*Do the caretakers of a Polish orphanage believe that their positive or negative presumptions could affect the children’s presumptions of their own future?*

1.6 Disposition

In the first chapter I will introduce my research area as well as clarifying the aim, the research questions and some concepts I will be using throughout the study. In chapter two I will provide you with the important background information such as previous research, my preliminary understanding and information about the orphanage I have visited. The third chapter will introduce you to my theoretical framework, the ecological perspective and the life model as well as the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy. In chapter four I will be outlining my methodological instruments along with the ethical considerations. The fifth chapter will
present my results and the last chapter will include my discussion along with validity and reliability issues and relevance for future research.

1.7 Explanation of concepts

**Orphan** - a child who has lost one or both parents through death or are unable to care for them.

**Orphanage** - a home for children whose parents are dead or unable to care for them.

**Life stressor** - moments in life where an individual feel real or perceived harm or loss because the environment and the individual are in bad relation (Gitterman & Germain, 2008, p.60).

**Caretaker** - someone who looks after a person who is young, old or ill.

**Transition** (From the orphanage) - the period of time during which the children changes from living in the orphanage to take care of themselves in the society.

**Presumption** – to take something for granted; suppose, strongly believing.

2. Background

Worldwide a large number of children and adolescents are living as and becoming orphans every day. I have found that it is hard to estimate the total number of orphans worldwide due to that many children come and go to the orphanages as well as there is a lack of monitoring of these children in many countries. However UNICEF has estimated that the most of the orphaned children are living in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America. The estimated number of orphans in these regions are 140.300.000 in 1995 but as the primary reason for the big number of orphans in these regions are AIDS, they estimate that the number is decreasing in the developed world (UNAIDS et al., 2004).

But as mentioned in the introduction I choose to conduct this study in Eastern Europe, in this relatively developed part of the world we can still find very many orphans and also problems with orphans and orphanages with very low standards. In Ukraine for instant, they have such a high number as 978.000 children that are either deprived of parental care or orphans (Zhylinkova, 2009 p. 652). And in Russia there are over one million orphans (Behind these walls 2010).
In Poland, where I choose to do my study they have according to me a lacking in protective laws for the children, for example corporal punishment is legal and performed in the country as well as child prostitution is very common (Foreign office, & cabinet office Sweden, 2007 p. 1). They also have such a high number as 100,000 children who are living either on the street or in homes that are considered to be under the minimum standards. In excess of this number another 50,000 children are living in foster families and 70,000 in children in excess of that number get a place in an institution in polish called “Dom Dziecka”, a children’s home or an orphanage. And it is in this place I will collect material for my study (Nowak-Fabrykowski, 1999).

2.1 Previous research

I could find tons of research conducted around the world concerning orphaned children in the developing world, but it does not exist very much research in this area considering the developed countries. Furthermore I could not find much information at all concerning the country Poland. Most of the research that has been carried out in Eastern Europe concerns on the health of the children growing up in orphanages. I believe this is due to that orphans from Eastern Europe often get adopted by foreigners. For example 18,000 children have been adopted since 1989 only by Americans. There is an interest of the adopters to know if they are to adopt healthy children. The conducted research tells me that 50 – 60 percent of the children growing up in orphanages suffer from learning and behavioural problems, anger and/or depression that could last their entire life (Jewel et al., 1998).

I on the other hand will do my research on the caretakers and their presumptions for the children’s future after the transition from the orphanage

In my pre – investigation I found one very interesting essay written by Eva Borg and Johanna Lindblom (2011) about two women growing up in care of the state in Sweden. One grew up in an orphanage and the other one in a foster family. The results show that the women feel affected both physically and psychologically off the default support in their childhood. And they are carrying these limitations even as grownups. Their study shows that lack of support and persons who believe in children in this situation could lead to limitations in life as well as depression and drug abuse.
Laura Clarets (2008) study concerning the psychological health of institutionalized orphans and vulnerable children in Maputo have also found the same physical and psychological effects in children growing up in an orphanage as Eva and Johanna, even though her research is performed in a totally different part of the world with very different circumstances. She is also discussing that the caretakers believed that the children had limited chances of getting education or starting a professional career. She as well discusses that children who have been through trauma sometimes protects themselves from disappointment by putting dreaming, fantasizing and playing on the side and focuses on surviving for another day.

Jessica Rösbo (2009) is in her report discussing that different cultures see differently on what a child needs to feel secure, to get self esteem and such. She did her study in South Africa which is a country that faces many more struggles than Poland, but I still think there is point’s worth to consider even when I am doing my study in a developed country in Europe.

Nina Stenberg (2007) is discussing the same area in her report about children in orphanages in Cambodia. But she actually finds differences in what caretaker from different countries believe is the ways of making children feel more secure. The caretakers in Cambodia believe that the way of making children feel more secure is to provide them with the primary needs such as clothes or food and so on whilst caretakers from other countries believe in the meaning of physical contact and getting the children to believe that everybody has the same human worth.

StinaBritta Hellberg and Sandra Ottestig (2005) has written a study about orphans that are living in Russia and got the chance to go to Sweden for two weeks during the summer one or more times during their time at the orphanage. She wants to see if the trip to Sweden has changed their presumptions of their future, to do this she has gathered information from the children themselves, the Russian caretakers and the family in Sweden which they had visited. One of the results she got shows that children get their self esteem and their presumptions of their future from the grownups that are closest to them and mean the most to them. I believe this could mean that if the caretakers do not believe in the children the children will not gain self esteem or believe in themselves.
Conclusion

It is concluded that a large number of the children growing up in orphanages around the world is affected by the time they spent in the orphanage in different ways. Many of the children are experiencing damage to their psyche which could stay with them and influence them negatively throughout their whole lives.

All of the studies seem to have the same primary goal of finding what could raise the quality of the orphaned children’s life. To find out what works and what is affecting the children positively and negatively. It is the same goal as I have on my study, the vision that lies as base for all the studies are that it is not enough with food and shelter and other primarily needs. These children need security, self esteem and someone who truly believes in them.

When I was searching for earlier research I realized that most studies I found regarding my subject area where concentrated around the same fields, I expanded and further developed four subject areas to use throughout my research and to develop questions around in my interview guide.

1. Attitudes around the children’s situation
2. Opportunities/ Limitations in the children’s life as grown ups
3. Dreams / hopes for the future of the children
4. Fears/negative expectations for the future of the children

2.2 Preliminary understanding

The attitudes of caretakers and its link to the wellbeing of the children is a subject that lies close to my heart as I always have been interested in helping children in this exposed situation. I have developed a pre-understanding in the subject as I have visited more than 25 orphanages in Eastern Europe, most of them when doing relief consignments to Estonia, Latvia and Poland. I have also during my studies visited a couple of state runner orphanages in China.

The biggest part of my preliminary understanding derives in my eight months working as a volunteer in Poland where I was working in a home for orphans as well as an English teacher in a couple of primary schools in the north of Poland.

I was living in a Polish family and followed them trough their daily lives absorbing the culture, the ambience and parts of the polish language.
I have chosen to see my pre – understanding of the subject as positive but I knew it also could have affected my study in a negative way if I had not taken it into consideration during every step of my research. As I have such a large preliminary understanding I chose to be very aware of it instead of trying to suppress it and start on a blank sheet.

2.3 The orphanage

The orphanage where I was doing my study was a quite modern orphanage outside a small city in the north of Poland. There are almost 60 children all between five and eighteen years old. In the orphanage they are divided in two sections; the younger section takes care of children in the ages between five and twelve and the other section are caring for the adolescents between thirteen and eighteen years of age. In total they have twelve caretakers, all women that work shifts taking care of the children. The primary work tasks for the caretakers is in the morning to get the children ready for school and all that it involves, like washing, dressing and walk with them to school, in the afternoon help them with homework and play with them. They have other personnel that prepared food as well as a janitor. The caretakers working in the orphanage and the children living there are performing Catholicism, they pray every morning and evening together as well as they goes to church every Sunday. People in Poland in general are very dedicated in performing their religion and in Poland it is very common that people go to church on Sundays even for the regular inhabitants.

2.4 The transition from the orphanage

During the interviews I was asking for detailed explanations in how a transition from the orphanage is performed and by combining the answers that all were very similar I will present the procedure for you here. When a child in the orphanage turns 18 she is no longer viewed as a child by the polish society and she must leave the orphanage. At the very day of her birthday all of the children are hugging her and wishing her good luck and they spend some time together while doing her favourite activity.
She has some belongings with her like clothes, an extra pair of shoes, hygiene articles and some photos when she is driven into the city by one of the caretakers. In the city centre she has a motel room paid for during seven days. After those seven days she should have been able to find a job. Most, as one of the caretakers are describing them, “Low status jobs” or work performed on the black labour jobs are paid per week so after that week she are supposed to be totally on her own.

If there are some problems with finding a job she could (if she applies for it) get some more time in the motel. In some cases the orphanage has already been able to find a work place for the children, according to the caretakers that are much more secure and convenient both for them and the child but it is not possible to have such a system as there are to less jobs in the area.

3 Coupling to theory

3.1 Ecosystem perspectives

I have in this study been looking at different social systems – the orphanage, that surrounds children and adolescents and the presumptions on what will happen after the transition from this recognized and safe system to another bigger and unfamiliar one – the society (Payne, 2005, Ch. 7). I am looking how this change in the children’s social environment could affect them and their situation.

Let us imagine an eco map and concentrate on one of the most used three systems in social work, micro, meso and macro systems: the micro system would include the closest relations, in this case most often friends and caretakers. The meso system might include school, their doctors and maybe if they know anyone else outside of the orphanage. The macro system would then be the larger social institutions which most off the children do not have any contact with.

When doing this we can see that after the transition the children are actually leaving their whole micro system, and are by themselves often for the first time get in contact with the larger systems (Healy, 2005).

One reason why I concentrated on the caretakers views in this research was that the caretakers take part in every system on the eco map. They are a big part of the children’s micro system
as well as they have lots of relations in the meso system and also are more involved in their macro system.

A key concept in the ecological perspective is social support; this means the quality and the extent of the social supportive network or system that surrounds an individual including emotional and psychological health benefits. Vulnerable people such as orphans are in greater need of a functioning supportive system as they according to my previous research are in the risk zone of getting psychological diagnoses such as learning and behavioural problems, anger and/or depression (Trevithick, 2010 p. 378).

3.2 The life model

The theory used in this research is primarily based on Gittermann and Germains (2008) life model. I chose this theory because of the focus on the fit between people and their environments as well as concentrating on the major stressors in people’s life and provide people with better coping strategies. It also aims toward giving people better personal and social resources.

I believe that the children in the orphanage are facing one of their biggest stressors in life at the transition from the orphanage, and I want to know if the caretakers have given them the resources they need for this transition. I see the most needed resources in this case are the children’s self esteem and their belief in themselves.

I think one of the most important tasks of a caretaker in an orphanage should be as Healy also describes as one of the approaches in the first step of the life model- to identify capacities and strengths of the client. The discussion of releasing an individual’s potential by focusing on the individual’s strong abilities is as well mentioned in Laura Clarets research where her results show that self esteem also could be built by letting the children know that they are good at something. In what area does not matter, for example a child that knows that they could run really fast might acquire self esteem that will make the child more confident even when she is doing something that does not include running (Claret, 2008, p. 34).

I also believe that step two in the life model could be used to help the children in the orphanage – To find good relations in the systems and between them as well as developing them, I believe that it could help the children during the transition if they had some contacts outside, then they would not be totally alone and exposed (Healy, 2005).
Having goals and getting help to reach them as well as monitoring the process could also help vulnerable clients, these methods are called “Goal attainment scaling methods” (Gitterman & Germain, 2008, p. 98).

The life model also focuses in recognizing vulnerability factors such as poverty, environmental hazards and low self esteem. It is important for people caring for vulnerable people to be aware of the hazards that could affect the clients and do their best to protect them from them. It is also important to let the vulnerable client be aware of the supportive networks that could be of help for them, sometimes only the information that there are networks available for support could result in giving people more confident and less anxiousness when dealing with big stressors (Gitterman & Germain, 2008, p. 244). Also the last stage of evaluation I believe could be of importance when considering the orphanage, no one but the child could tell what is good or a bad intervention is, which is why communication is essential for improvement (Healy, 2005).

3. 3 Self fulfilling-prophecy

Another concept I have chose to take into consideration when analyzing my data is self-fulfilling prophecy, the concept could be explained as a prediction that becomes true by the terms of the prophesy itself directly or indirectly, this is due to a creation of positive feedback between belief and behaviour. It is a very old concept that was used as far back as ancient Greece and India. The concept is used in many different behavioural sciences such as education, career building, explaining terrorism and so forth (Surhone et al, 2010).

4. Methodology

4.1 Mode of procedure

In my pre – investigation of my research area I was searching trough databases with articles as well as essays and dissertations. I used search terms like “orphanage, “orphan”, “caretakers” and so on and got quite few essay hits while I found tons of articles. I chose the literature I have been working with on the criteria that they should consider how children growing up in orphanages get affected by their childhood.
After my pre-investigation I chose to do a Qualitative study on the caretakers in an orphanage as I found it to be the most suitable method for this particular research. I wanted to gain deeper knowledge about the problem as well as be a part of the material collection of the research (Rosengren & Arvidson, 2005). I also wanted a deep understanding of my research area and some kind of intimacy I do not believe I could get with use of a quantitative method, even if I then would have gotten the chance to use more informants.

Semi structured face to face interviews were performed where my interview guide included four areas and some example questions for each area (see appendix). During the interviews I came up with suitable questions and could follow up the information I found valuable for the research. This gave me rich information as I could let the interesting discussions keep on (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p 130).

The interviews were conducted during day time in an office separated from the orphanage and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes each. I used two tape recorders in every interview in case of technical problems. During the interview I used a translator even though I have some knowledge of the language to be sure to understand everything and also for the convenience of the interviewee.

4.2 Sample

There is a couple of reasons why I chose to interview the caretakers in the orphanage. One is that I wanted to know the caretakers presumptions for the future and I felt that they were the best ones to give me those answers. Another one that I already brought up in the theoretical part was that the caretakers are covering so many parts of the children’s eco map as well as they are their link to the larger level. The third reason was an ethical consideration as the children were under 18 years of age.

The respondents were chosen by a convenience sample as I got to do the interview with four of the caretakers who worked that day. (Castillo, 2009) As all of the caretakers working in the orphanage were women my research includes interviews with four women who has dissimilar ages and has been working at the orphanage for different amounts of years.
4.3 Philosophy of science and analysis

All of the interviews were transcribed word by word to a written text. The process was given the time needed for a thoroughly transcription as well as checking the accuracy several times by repeated listening (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.179).

I used two analytical tools when analysing all my interviews, the first one is hermeneutics which has helped me to get a deeper understanding of the interview persons by leading me through the process of reading the transcriptions time after time. This gave me new interpretation of the material for every time I read it. And for every new interpretation I developed arguments that could be either critical or supportive (see figure below) (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, pp. 104 - 105).

![The hermeneutic circle: Base version](Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009:104)

I put my focus in to understand the interview person’s world and their actions by putting close attention to their descriptions, and try to look deeper beyond what is said to find their real meaning. As I was having this dialogue with the text (The interviews) I kept coming back to a couple of areas that seemed to be of major importance for my study. I let these subject form three themes which I have been concentrating on both in the result part as well as in the analysis. The themes I developed are - “A hard world”, “Being honest” and ”Presumptions that affect”.

After I found the themes I performed meaning coding/categorization as well as condensation to separate the parts of the interviews that I found interesting for my study and categorize them under the right theme. Then I did separate meaning interpretations of the data I had categorized under each theme and in the end I made a holistic interpretation of all of the themes together (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, Ch.12).

As the caretakers beliefs and set of mind is a central part of my study I felt that phenomenology could be of use to find the essence of what the caretakers really think. During the time I spent reading the transcriptions, following the hermeneutical spiral I was at the same
time trying to describe the structure of the information I found by putting my own words in the sentences and find how they really are experiencing letting go of the children and what presumptions they really had (Payne, 2005. pp. 162 – 165) (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.14).

In the analysis I was concentrating on the key concepts of the ecological perspective and the life model as well as the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy such as, changes in the environment and between the systems, support and support systems, coping with stressors, resources such as capacities and strengths, self esteem and confident, recognising vulnerability factors, supportive systems and communication.

In the beginning of the study I decided to make my study deductive as it felt like I would have a more stable ground to stand on and it felt needed as my data was not collected in my country of origin .The fact that I already had some information about the subject from earlier research made me feel more secure and accustomed in the research area (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 3).

4.4 Ethical Considerations

I made the choice not to interview the children at the orphanage as they were under 18 years of age and also because they are a very vulnerable group in society. I also did it because of the administrative issues such as I would need approval from their legal guardian which would be a problematic and sensitive areas to bring up as well as I do not know the laws in doing research on children in the country of Poland.

All of my interview persons was given informed content, promised confidentiality and was informed of their right to not participate in the interview as well as the right to break off the interview at any time.

The translator I was using during the interviews is a student on university level and well aware of the ethical consideration as well as the confidentiality.

For the sake of the confidentiality I have chosen not to mention the name of the city, the orphanage or the caretakers who has participated in my study to protect the participants from personal exposure. I have also deleted the recorded files from the interviews and the
transcriptions are handled with care and do not include any names (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

4.5 Reliability, validity

Before starting my data collection I was carefully looking through the field with a pre investigation, I was capturing the content which gave me a stable platform for my research. My pre – understanding could also be considered quite broad and I also believe that this could raise the reliability of the study as I have been living in Polish family and worked in a Polish orphanage for eight months.

I was trying to be free from bias and not letting my pre-understanding interfere with the performance of any part of the study; however I do not believe it is possible to be totally blank when conducting the research, so instead of trying to suppress my pre-understanding and my experience from my time in Poland I was trying to be as aware as possible of it and make use of it instead.

In my research I was investigating attitudes and presumptions which are elements that no measuring device could properly measure as they are changing all the time. It is therefore important to keep in mind that my research results will be affected as my interview persons develop.

I also have to take into consideration that the caretakers might have felt uncomfortable of threatened even if they showed no signs for it as far as I could see during the interviews. They might have been nervous as it was both me and a translator listening to their answers.

I was trying my best to construct validity by making sure I was asking questions in a clear and understandable way, I discussed some of the questions with my translator before the interview to make sure they were understandable and that he would translate them with the right accentuation.

I was also using some member checks in the end of the interviews where I asked them again about what I found most interesting during the interview. I also believe that face to face interview was a really good method as I could correct misunderstanding in the questions right away. Furthermore I analysed my data two times with one week’s interval.

Considering the credibility of my research, I only did four interviews in one orphanage and they could not stand for the attitudes or presumptions of all the caretakers in Poland. However I believe that my study still has captured the content of the attitudes of caretakers in Poland.
By interviewing these four caretakers I got a glimpse of what the attitudes of caretakers in polish orphanages consist of in general.

5. Results

5.1 Introduction

In my result section I will present the results from my four interviews by presenting each theme that I found during the data collection and analysis one by one. In the end of the chapter I will present a conclusion with my holistic interpretation of my results.

I want to clarify that I only took out the information from the interviews that I found usable for my study. When putting up that information in this way it might be misinterpreted in the way that it might seem like the caretakers do not care about the children. I would like to emphasize that all of the four caretakers showed lots of affection for the children throughout the interviews and repeated many times how much they loved them so that no such misinterpretations could be done when reading this chapter.

In the presentation of the results I have chosen not to identify which caretaker who says what with the use of code names. I made this choice because I got very similar answers from all of the interviewees and when I did not I believed it was enough to write it in text.

I believe that the result section gets more structured when dividing the results in themes in my opinion the code names would only make the section promiscuous. However I want to emphasize that I have used quotations from all the interviews and no interview has been unstated.

5.2 A hard world

A subject all of my interview persons seem to bring up and come back to during our interviews seems to be what a hard world we are living in. They tell me that these children are in the risk zone of falling into bad patterns in life such as prostitution, drug abuse, working without salary, alcoholism, ending up in the streets or getting married with older men to secure their economical situation.
They are especially concerned about the girls as they seem to be extra vulnerable, one of the caretakers said:

“*These young girls are balancing on a thin thread that is the only thing that keeps the above falling into the cruelties that exist in this men’s world*”

The biggest threats for the boys seem to be alcoholism or get stuck in working with no salary, a caretaker tells me:

“*They get hired and promised a salary that they never get which prevents them from leaving*”

All of the caretakers believe that the children might have to leave their home town to find a job, but they are concerned that most of the children have dreams and a will to go to the capital, Warsaw which not seem according to the caretakers to be the best place to start a new life.

“*If they stay here they have an ok chance, but if they go to Warsaw, god knows what will happen to them*”

When I asked the caretakers if they believe that most children end up with a good life or in the bad patterns they are talking about all of the answered that they do not know, one of them added by saying..

“*I hope they end up with good lives, but, no... I do not know*”

When I asked them if they believed that most of the children would find a job three of the caretakers agreed that they believed that, one of them said

“*as they do not search for any fancy job it is easy, most often they find something like cleaning the streets or cleaning something else...*”
I also asked them how they could make the transition easier for the children and all of them brought up that it is much easier and safer for the children when they have the opportunity to give them a job right away after the transition from the orphanage.

But they also bring up that most employers in Poland have an unofficial dislike in hiring children who has a background growing up in an orphanage. When I asked why the caretakers believed that the employers might think that the children are less smart or thieves. They also added that the employers might think that they do not want to risk working with vulnerable and psychologically weak persons.

Two of the caretakers also believe that the children are less smart than other children, one of them said:

“these children do not get the same opportunities for help with homework and school as other children; therefore they could not reach the same levels as them”

Conclusion

All of the caretakers are on their own initiative raising the issue of bad patterns, or elements such as prostitution, alcoholism or drug addiction. They are also talking about that the girls are extra vulnerable for these elements. They are as well discussing dangers of going to Warsaw and that they should be able to find a work done on the black labour market or a as they put it “low status job”. They also reveal that there is an unofficial dislike on the labour market to hire children who have grown up in orphanages because some people see them as less smart, as thieves or as weak and vulnerable.

Claret (2008) found similar results in her report, there is a belief in orphanages in Maputo as well that the children has limited chances of getting education or starting a professional career.

5.3 Being honest

Another thing the caretakers were all discussing closer in the area of children’s dreams and hopes for the future was that someone has to tell these children that they do not have the same
opportunities as other children to have the career they are dreaming of. This is mostly because of their considerable smaller chance to go to a university.

“The children has no chance to go to university as they could never could afford this.. “

When I asked the caretakers if they believed that children in the orphanage had the same amount of dreams as other children they all agreed that they had, but that they would realise sooner that the dream would be very hard to reach because of their background.

“I believe that the children here have the same amount of dreams as other children, but I think they realize earlier than other children that they have a small chance of reaching it/./ these children do not have parents to lean back to if they venture everything on their dream.”

The caretakers agree that most children find out by themselves that they do not have as many opportunities for the future as other children. But one of the caretakers tells me about a girl who believed in her chances of becoming an author even as a teenager and ends the story with when she told the girl she needed to see the reality for what it is or else she would end up somewhere bad.

..”Someone had to tell the poor girl the truth /.../ if she would continue to live in a dream world she would have no chance in the future”

The same caretaker also states that it is important for children to dream to train their imagination and learn how to express themselves. But she does not believe that she is ruining the children’s dreams when she declares for the children that their dreams will never come true. The other caretakers are also discussing when the right time to tell the children that their dreams are to high set, but all of them believe that it has to be done before the child leaves the orphanage. When I asked the caretaker what happened to the girl she told me that she had gone to Warsaw and had no contact with the orphanage.
Another thing the caretakers closely discussed was if and when they should tell the children about the dangers out in real life, the bad patterns I brought up earlier; three of them agreed that the children must be informed of them.

One of the caretakers had gone through both prostitution and drug abuse and she believed it was of big concern that the children got to know about these things.

“If the children know what to avoid and why we might be able to protect them from it”

She also tells me about that she have told most of the older girls her story and believe that the children should get more information about these things. But there is one of the other caretakers who tell me about this caretakers own initiative of doing this and according to her the story scares the children.

“.. and she scares the younger children with these terrible stories from her life..”

The forth caretaker do not believe they should tell the children about these things, she believe that it is the job of the school to provide the children with this kind of information. She does not believe that children growing up in an orphanage need more information than other children.

Conclusion

The caretakers are discussing the children’s dreams and hopes for the future as well as the children’s small opportunities compared to the other children to go to university. They believe that the children has the same amount of dreams but will be reminded earlier that it will be hard to reach it. They are discussing that most children find out by themselves that they will have trouble reaching their dreams but if they do not they have to tell them before they leave the orphanage.

Claret (2008) is adding an interesting theory to this that declares that children who have been through trauma sometimes protects themselves from disappointment by putting dreaming, fantasizing and playing on the side and focuses on surviving for another day.
The caretakers are also talking about if they should tell the children about the dangers and the elements discussed. Three of them believe they should, including one that already is sharing her personal life story that includes these elements with the children. The fourth caretaker believes that this type of information should be issued in school.

5.4 Presumptions that affect

In the end of each interview I asked the caretakers if they believed that their presumptions on the children’s future are in conclusion positive or negative, the answers were divided, two of the four caretakers said that they might have negative presumptions but they are at least being honest. It felt like they were feeling accused by me when they answered this question.

“.. I guess I have negative presumptions regarding the children’s future, but it is not like I wish for anything bad to happen to them, I am just being honest”

The other two believed they had neither positive nor negative presumptions, one of them said she had neutral presumptions regarding the children’s future while the other one stated:

“... Both I believe, I am I scared to death that something will happen to them, in the same time I believe they have a fair chance of finding a good life..”

The question if they believed that their presumptions of the future of the children could affect what would happen to them they foundt very interesting and questioned that maybe they ought to have more belief in the future of the children as they are the closest thing they have to a parent.

When I asked one of the caretakers if she thought her presumptions of the children’s future could affect them she answered:

“.. I never thought of that, maybe... is it so? Do you know? /.../ well if that is the case I guess I certainly have to find myself some more believe, maybe god could help me? ..”

In the end of the answer to the question about if their presumptions could affect the children all of the caretakers came to the conclusion that it was not possible that it could. While the
subject was discussed they were hesitating and considered the questions for a much longer time than any other part of the interview. One of them said.

“.. No I do not believe that they could be affected off what I think, but I have heard something about a six sense that some people have, maybe some children could feel it? Or wait.. that is stupid huh?.. no I do not believe they could”

While another one very clearly stated

“.. They are not mind readers, they are children”

**Conclusion**

Two of the caretakers are straightforward saying that their presumptions for the children are negative and add that they do not mean any harm by it. One of the other caretakers claims to have neutral presumptions while the last one neither had positive nor negative presumptions regarding the children’s future. Borg and Lindblom (2011) conclude in their report that a lack of support and persons who believe in children in this situation could lead to limitations in life as well as depression and drug use.

None of the caretakers believe that their presumptions could affect the children’s own presumptions regarding their future; however they were hesitating a lot and took longer time to answer this part of the interview than any other.

**5.6 Analysis of “a hard world”**

To support a child or an adolescent and give them the proper resources they will need for managing to go through the big stressor that the transition from the orphanage must be for these adolescents is an important part of the caretakers job. It is obvious after talking to the caretakers they believe that the children get enough love and physical contact, which are both important elements. But another resource that the children are in need of especially during the transition from the orphanage is a person that believes in them and their future.
If we would ask a parent in Poland what they believed was waiting in their children’s future I do not believe that any of these elements such as prostitution, alcoholism or drug abuse would come to the surface. That is why my conclusion is that these caretakers do not succeed in giving the children this resource. The caretakers need distinctive knowledge and skills to help the children to manage this stressful life transition. The caretakers also need to believe in the children and trust that they will keep away from the bad elements like a parent will (Gitterman & Germain, 2008, pp. 191 – 194).

It is important to consider that the decisions the adolescent makes and the paths they chose is largely based on how they have developed their emotional, cognitive and social capacities. That means that it is of importance that the caretakers help them to develop the right capacities to protect them from falling into bad behaviours in the future. They could also build up protective capacities that will give them better abilities to feel comfortable in new and unknown environments to prepare them for the transition (Ibid, pp. 52 - 53).

I believe that these bad elements (Prostitution, drug addiction and so on) were so largely discussed during the interview because the caretakers believe that it is a big risk that these elements will cross many of the children’s life paths and cause negative behaviours for some of them, and this means that their presumptions could be considered negative.

If we connect this data with the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy we can find that the caretakers negative presumptions could be transferred to the children them self which could develop an unconscious believe that their life path probably will cross these bad elements and this might make them attracted to them. (Surhone et al, 2010).

5.7 Analysis of “being honest”

Dreams and hopes that the children has, it could be a career or something material that they always wanted, I believe that they are resources for succeeding in the life after the transition. As dreams and hopes also could be seen as goals for the children I believe it is of importance that they keep their dreams even as grownups. As I mentioned in the theoretical framework chapter there are methods that say that putting up goals for the client and involve them in the process of getting there could help the clients (Gitterman & Germain, 2008, p. 98). It is also important to concentrate on finding the children’s weaknesses concentrating on identifying their strengths, as well as give them hope and reassurance (Ibid, p.198).
I believe that by as the caretakers put it – being honest to the children are destroying their dreams and make them let go of their goals. I also believe that the children in this face also could lose their self esteem which is an important protective factor in adolescent’s ability of handling life stressors (Ibid, p. 63, 244).

I also believe that the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy could make the children that get the believe that they will not get anything out of their lives to stop fighting for anything- give up, which will make the prophecy come true.

I believe it is dangerous to let young adults with no goals in life leave all of their micro system and stand on their own. Maybe this is one of the reasons that there are as many of the earlier discussed bad elements such as prostitution or drug abuse that are crossing these young adults lives.

I believe that this surely could and probably are affecting the children’s own presumptions regarding their future as the caretakers more or less tells them what they could and could not expect from their lives.

5. 8 Analysis of “presumptions that affect”

It was interesting but hurtful to find out that none of the caretakers saw their presumptions regarding the children’s future as positive.

The result showed that none of the caretakers believed that the children were affected by their negative presumptions of the children’s future, but all of the showed signs of uncertainty. They were hesitating and deliberated the questions regarding this subject for a long time before answering. I believe that this behaviour shows an uncertainty in the caretakers, I do not believe that they were unsure of their answer when answering this question.

I interpret that the two caretakers that are, as they put it being honest about their negative presumption feel bad about this fact as they show signs of getting accusing feelings when the area is discussed.

I believe it as good that the caretakers got a eye-opener in this subject even though none of them in the end believed that their presumptions could affect they might still bear the thought of it in their mind. And I really think that it is a discussion that should be taken into consideration.

StinaBritta Hellberg and Stina Ottestigs (2005) result in their study regarding Russian orphans come to the conclusion that these children get their self esteem and their presumptions of the
future from the grownups that are closest to them and are most important to them. In this case the caretakers have negative presumptions which mean that they are also affecting the children to pick up these feelings.

5.9 Holistic analysis

In this analysis I have been concentrating on key concepts of the ecological perspective and the life model that I brought up earlier in the theoretical framework. These key concepts include as, changes in the environment and between the systems, support and support systems, coping with stressors, resources such as capacities and strengths, self esteem and confident, recognising vulnerability factors, supportive systems and at last communication. I have also taken the concept of self – fulfilling prophecy into consideration.

The children concerned in this study are about to face one of the biggest stressors in their lives, the transition from the orphanage, their safe environment, their whole micro system and all the supportive systems they have created throughout their lives so far will be left behind. (Healy, 2005).

Are the children ready for this? It is not an unexpected event; it is something both the children and the caretakers have known that will come for a long time, and they should use that as an advantage and do what they can to prepare the child for this stressor.

The results show that the support systems that are surrounding the children and adolescents do not seem to give the optimal support. The children are in the risk zone of creating a distrust both in the society as they only seem to be informed of the bad sections of the society, the bad elements that the caretakers do not believe many of the children has a chance of elude. They are also in the risk zone of creating a disbelieve in their selves or a negative self – fulfilling prophecy as the caretakers seem to tell them that their dreams and goals are set to high if they do not come to this conclusion, that has not been proven true, by themselves. (Trevithick, 2010 p. 378).

I believe this disbelieve comes from the caretakers who are informing the children about the vulnerability factors and the hazards that they might will have to face. Informing the children of these hazards is of importance, but they are contributing to their disbelief as they are not in the same time giving the children the self esteem and confident they need to overcome these hazards.
The caretakers in this polish orphanage is giving the children many elements they need to grow up to healthy grownups, but my results show me that they are missing out in giving the children the resources they need to face the waiting stressor of the transition as well as in their lives as grownups. They should be putting more focus on some of the key concepts I was mention in the theoretical framework, such as to identify the children’s strengths and capacities, encourage them and make sure they believe in their ability to go through this transition and to develop a good life. They should also inform the children of supportive networks that they could approach after leaving the orphanage, it could be for example organisations or groups in society that are facing or have faced difficult situations and need contacts. (Gitterman & Germain, 2008, p. 244).

Another area where the caretakers might contribute to create the children’s disbelief in the society and their selves is when they are informing the children that they have to high set dreams and goals. According to the life model it is important to strengthen the individual. Instead of informing them that their goals are impossible to reach they should concentrate on encourage the children to follow their dreams. A method that the caretakers could use if they feel afraid that the children will be disappointed if they do not reach their goals and therefore will fall into some of the discussed elements is goal attainments strategies. If they help the children to develop both goals that are close at hand as well as ones that are harder to reach throughout their lifespan the children will be used to both success and development, and hopefully learn to deal with both. If the children both have long- term and short – term goals when leaving the orphanage they will have a good chance of succession, as well as they will have developed the ability to create new goals (Gitterman & Germain, 2008).

To further help the adolescents I believe that they should have open dialogues before, during and after the transition to find new ways of better coping with the this stressor. These adolescents know best what could have been done better to help them because they only could know how a transition like this affects them. Open discussions could also contribute to a larger trust between the caretakers and the children. (Healy, 2005).
7. Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Doing this research has been of high personal value for me. When I was working within the Polish orphanage a couple of years ago I did not know anything about social work nor had I any idea how I could help the children and the caretakers there, even though I was carrying a heavy will to do that. Performing this research has made me realise how much more I could perform there now as a soon educated social worker, and this make me feel that I have chosen the correct path in life.

7.2 Results

I believe that the result I got from my research clearly answer my research questions and followed my aim – By using the method of qualitative interviews and an ecological perspective I came to the conclusion that the caretakers do not have positive presumptions on what will happen to the children living in the orphanage future. And also I believe that you could from the results and my interpretation that even if only two of the four interviewees said straightforward that they had negative presumptions the rest of the interviews showed that they all have more or less negative presumptions regarding the children’s future when they were discussing what they thought would or could happen. We have also concluded that the caretakers do not giving the children optimal support and preparation to leave the orphanage and could also create negative self-fulfilling prophecy for them. My research shows that there is much room for improvement and in the area of possessing the children with self esteem and a belief in the society and in themselves. The results also show that none of the caretakers believe that their, as now concluded, negative presumptions could affect the children. But there seem to be some uncertainty in all of the data answering this question, maybe the result had been different if I had given them a longer time to think about it. Anyway it seems like even if the children do not get affected of the caretaker’s negative presumptions, the way that they are dealing with the children make them aware of these presumptions anyway by getting aware of the hazards that exists and their little chance of reaching their goals.
I hope that these results could open up for further research in the area and an improvement of caretakers the handling with orphaned children.

7.3 The mode of procedure

The process has included no considerable obstacles and I feel that the life model was a fitting theory to help me analyze my results as it had its focus both on environmental issues as well as the importance of giving people the resources they need to face the major stressors in life. I believe that qualitative face to face interviews were the best approach to this problem as it helps me to come closer to the interview persons and experience their views of the issued area.

I was considering using a complementary theory to the life model as it is very affective when combing it, it might have broaden my interpretations and analysing the data with two theories might have been more effective. However I decided that in this particular research the life model was sufficient as I was measuring the attitudes the caretakers had at that time, if it had been a research that were measuring attitudes over time another theory might have been assisting the researcher. In this particular research I believe a complimentary theory might have made the analysis more difficult and messy without contributing a lot if at all to the final interpretations.

Another approach I could have made could have been focusing on narratives; I believe these caretakers have lots of stories that could have provided me with very interesting stories that could have brought me even closer to their lives and their experiences and it would have giving me a lot.

However I believe that it would have been hard for the caretakers to tell me their personal stories regarding their personal lives because of the many barriers that exist between us, such as the language, the culture and our different circumstances in life. Therefore I think I made the right choice when putting together my theoretical framework as well as my methodological frame.

I am aware that the results I have found are the outcomes of my chosen method, the theoretical framework and the type of analysis I have chosen to work with. If I had chosen another mode of procedure the results had most likely been different.
I believe that the life model also could be used by the caretakers in orphanages around the world to prepare the children for the transition from the orphanage; the three-step method, described in the theoretical framework is perfectly fitted for this particular use.

7.4 Connection to earlier results

Earlier research has showed that Children get affected by their time spent in an orphanage, both psychologically and physically. I found that many of the effects that Eva Borg and Johanna Lindblom (2011) has found in the stories of their interviewed women are the same as the caretakers are afraid of and are presuming for the children in the orphanage. This could show that the caretakers has a reason to be anxious about these bad elements that they and Eva and Johanna is talking about – drug addiction, depression, prostitution or sexual abuse. I actually found some similarities in my results and Laura Clarets (2008) research in Maputo as well, in her interviews they were as well discussing that the children do not have same opportunities in their future life for example regarding reaching their dreams or developing a career. I found it very interesting that both of our respondents agree to that the children has less opportunities than other children for education and for developing a career as well as both of the interviews happen to concentrate on this subject.

Another thing that is brought up in both of our studies is the part about the dreams of the children. According to the polish caretakers most of the children have dreams about the future, but the most adolescent they stated often found out by themselves that their dreams will be hard to reach. In Lauras it is brought up that children who have been through trauma sometimes protects themselves from disappointment by putting dreaming, fantasizing and playing on the side and focuses on surviving for another day.

I personally believe that being forced to let go of your dreams could be a trauma for the children so I do not believe that the polish caretakers do the right thing when they are as they put it telling the adolescents their vision of the truth.

I also found couplings between my result and the research made by Jessica Rösbo (2009) as she has found differences in what the caretakers from different countries believe is the way of making the children feel secure. I also found one that I did not expect, the caretakers in Poland believe that they could make the children more secure by telling them that they will have a hard time reaching their dreams, to prepare them and protect them from disappointment. It could compliment the different opinions she found. Like the ones in
Cambodia believe it is by supporting them with primary needs while others believe it is by physical contact or letting them be aware of their and other people’s worth.

7.5 Limitations and future research

The biggest limitation I faced during my study was the limited amount of time I had to perform my research. I had many ideas in the beginning that I considered to be too time consuming in the end, for example I wanted to interview the children and add another area on the interview guide – foster care vs. Orphanage but due to the time limit I had to leave areas such as this one out of my study.

As I have mentioned in the introductions formulation of the problem, I believe this area of research is very important as there are so many children in the world who will go through growing up in an orphanage. If we put effort in developing these social institutions we could raise the quality of life for unthinkable great numbers of children. As I mentioned in previous research there are 50 – 60 percent of the children growing up in orphanages who are suffering from different psychological diagnoses. (Jewel et al., 1998) There must be a way to protect the children growing up in orphanages from these damages.

I believe it is important to do research in if the caretakers presumptions regarding the children are affecting the children’s own presumptions and in this case in what ways? Some research in this area with the children as data sources would for example be of interest.

If the further research would show that the presumptions could affect the children, which I do personally believe, it is of great importance to do further research in this subject. Maybe develop a program for changing the presumptions of the caretakers and in the same period measure the children’s presumptions of their own future.

I also would find it interesting to perform further research that includes male care takers as I excluded them from this study. For example it would find it interesting to see if these questions would have been answered differently by males.
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Appendix – Interview guide

Introduction
How old are you?
How long have you been working in this orphanage?
Could you tell me a little about your work tasks?
Do you like your job?
Could you tell me a little about why/Why not?

1. The anticipation of the transition of the child:
   *Attitudes around the children’s situation / Fears
   Can you describe your thoughts about the children’s situation here at the orphanage?
   Could you describe the processes of a child leaving this orphanage?
   Where do the children go after living here? / provided with work, housing?
   What do you think most often happen for the children after leaving?
   What are your fears when saying goodbye to a child?
   Do you believe you could support them further in any way during the transition?

   *Opportunities/ Limitations in their lives as grown ups
   Do you thing growing up in an orphanage could give the children any limitations in their life’s as grownups?
   Opportunities?

   *Dreams / hopes for the future of the children
   Have you heard the children talk about their dreams or hopes in the future?
   How did you answer the child?
   Do you believe the children have more or less hope or the future than children not growing up in an orphanage?
   Why/Why not?

2. If they believe they have the ability to change the anticipation
   *Attitudes around the children’s situation / fears
   Do you believe that your anticipations of the future of the child could affect what will happen to the child?
   How do you believe the other caretakers think?
   Do you believe that your fears for the future of the child could affect the child?

   *Opportunities/ Limitations in their lives as grown ups
   Could you help them get more opportunities for the future in any way?

   *Dreams / hopes for the future of the children
   Do you think it is important for the children to have dreams?
   Could you tell me a bit about why/why not?