

# The impact of transitions in residential care on young people's personal networks. A comparison of three transition types

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## Transitions in Residential Care (RC)

- Within the Child Welfare System, RC is a specific form of out-of-home placement for children and adolescents
- Many different types of transitions into, within and out of RC
  - Entering Care
  - **Leaving Care to independence**
  - **Return to the family of origin**
  - **Change of RC facility**
  - Transition from RC to Foster Care
- Transitions can be critical life events, often involving significant changes across various life domains – among these social relationships

# Research on Social Relationships in RC Transitions

## Leaving care to independence

- Abrupt transition: Loss of social support (Palmer et al., 2022), Loneliness & social exclusion (Häggman-Laitila, 2018)
- Mixed results concerning networks: smaller networks (Theile, 2020), expanding networks (Reuben, 2024)

## Return to the family of origin

- Reintegration into the family as coping task
- Persistent attachment problems & difficult relationships with parents (Esposito et al, 2022; Stubbs et al., 2023)

## Change of RC facility

- Placement changes can cause disruptions of the social networks

## Current Study

# How do young people's personal networks change as they transition within or out of residential care?

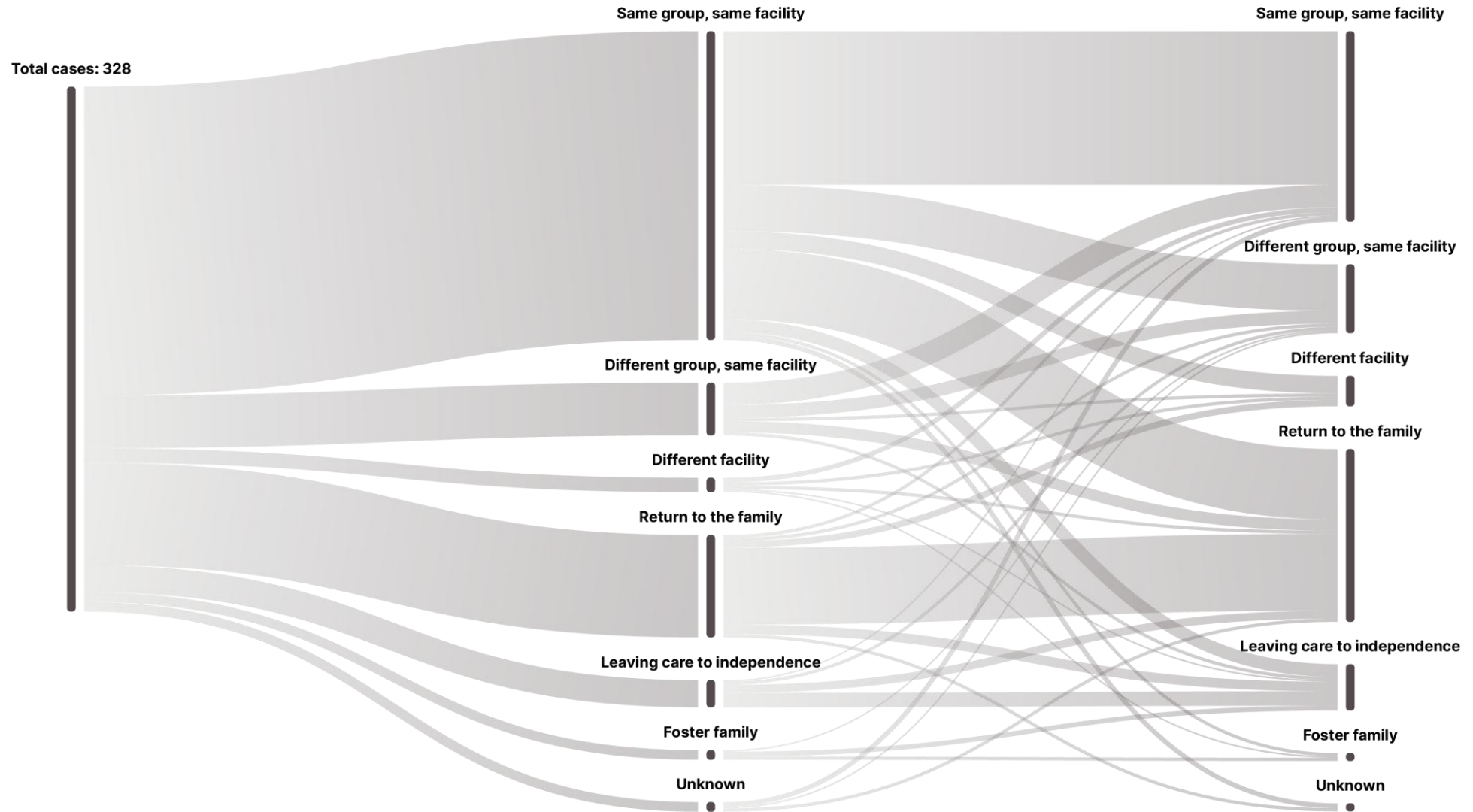
- Application of the personal network approach in a longitudinal research design in RC allows to study network characteristics before and after transitions
- Taking different types of transitions into account enables a more precise understanding of how each transition affects network dynamics

## Data and Sample

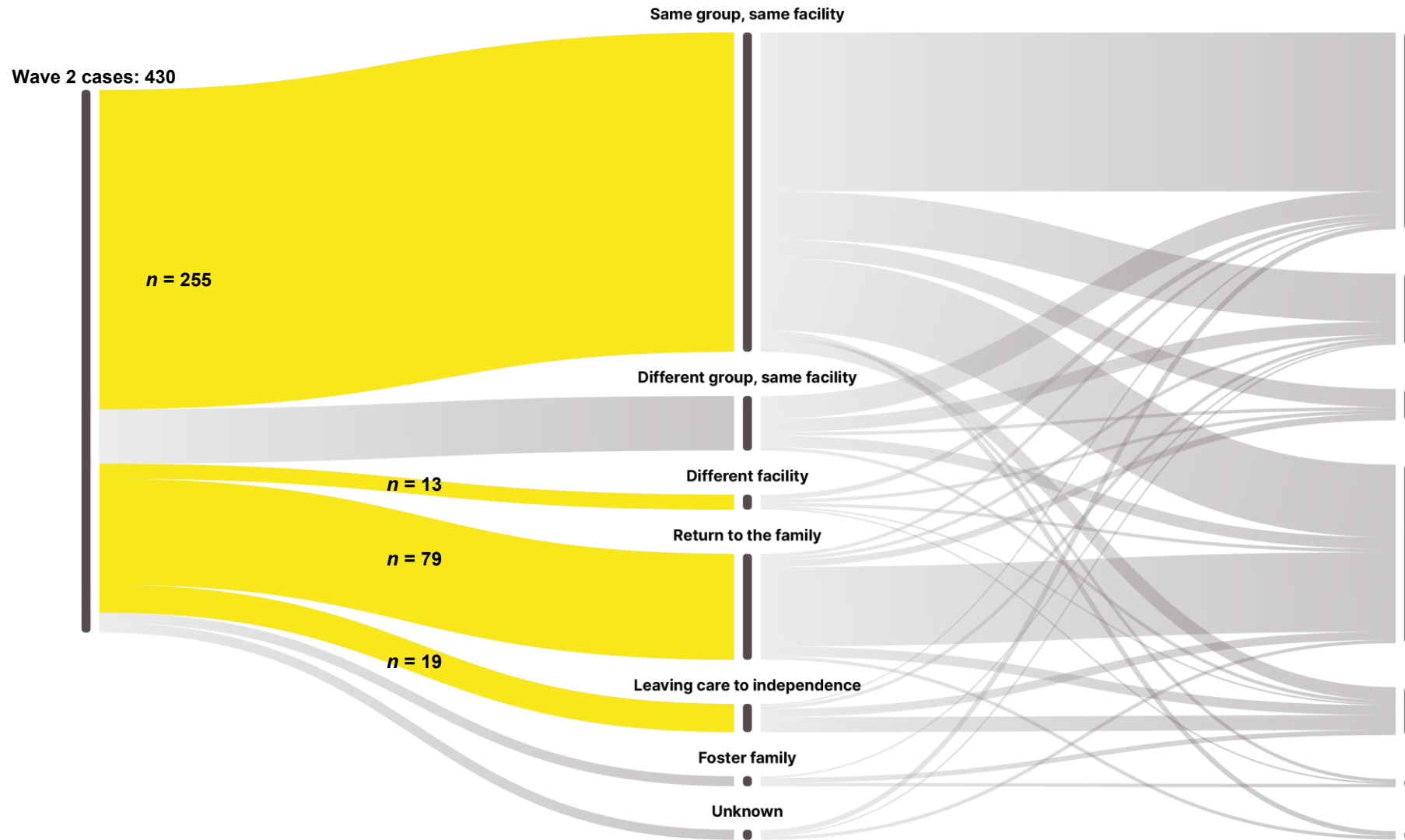
### StePLife

The personal life of young people in RC

- Quantitative Panel Study in Swiss-German RC with 3 waves (2022-2024)
  - Data collected with an online-based survey
  - Wave 1 in 2022: 559 participants from 90 different RC facilities in 15 cantons
  - Wave 2 in 2023: 430 participants
  - Wave 3 in 2024: 356 participants
- Drop-out rate (wave 1-3): 36.3%



Graphic by Nicola Boss, Digital Competence Hub, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland



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# Research Instruments

## Personal network

Network size:

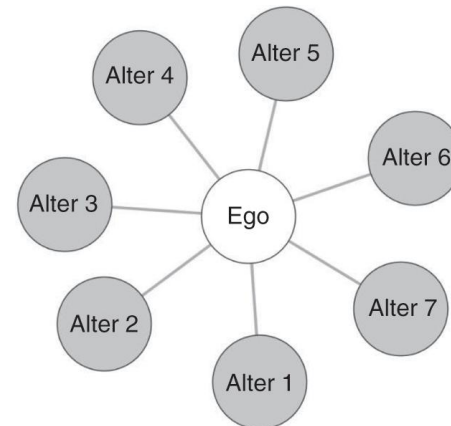
- Name generator (free listing, max. 13 network members)

Network composition:

- Information on the listed network members (role, relationship duration, contact frequency, geographical distance)

Network structure:

- Support
- Conflict



McCranie, 2018

# Name generator

Which people (or animals) have been important to you in last year, even if you didn't always get along with them?

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Please list at least one person (or animal) by first name.

Person 1

John

Person 2

Person 3

Person 4

Person 5

Person 6

Person 7

Person 8

Person 9

Person 10

## Results: Network size and composition

	Network size		Share of professionals		Share of friends		Share of family members	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Transition types:</i>								
1. Change of facility	0.02	1.13	0.05	4.41	0.00	9.60	-0.07	9.24
2. Return to the family	-0.13**	0.44	-0.10*	1.71	0.11*	3.73	-0.01	3.59
3. Leaving care	-0.06	0.76	-0.05	2.98	0.08	6.49	-0.04	6.27
Baseline score (DV)	-0.59**	0.05	-0.59**	0.05	-0.59**	0.06	-0.53**	0.06
Age	-0.01	0.13	0.07	0.50	0.04	1.08	-0.02	1.04
Gender (0 = female)	-0.13**	0.36	-0.05	1.39	0.02	3.04	0.07	2.93

\* ≤ 0.05; \*\* ≤ 0.01

## Results: Support and Conflict

	Number of supportive ties		Number of conflicted ties	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Transition types:</i>				
1. Change of facility	0.04	1.18	0.18**	0.56
2. Return to the family	-0.12*	0.45	-0.02	0.24
3. Leaving Care	-0.04	0.84	-0.05	0.42
Baseline score (DV)	-0.57**	0.05	-0.64**	0.06
Age	0.01	0.13	-0.04	0.07
Gender (0 = female)	-0.10	0.37	-0.20**	0.19

\* ≤ 0.05; \*\* ≤ 0.01

## Results: Face-to-face and telephone/internet contact

	Face-to-face contact frequency		Telephone/internet contact frequency	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Transition types:</i>				
1. Change of facility	-0.08†	0.45	-0.05	0.53
2. Return to the family	-0.06	0.18	0.13*	0.21
3. Leaving Care	-0.04	0.30	0.11†	0.36
Baseline score (DV)	-0.64**	0.06	-0.46**	0.06
Age	-0.09	0.05	-0.07	0.06
Gender (0 = female)	0.10*	0.14	0.03	0.17

† ≤ 0.10 \*; ≤ 0.05; \*\* ≤ 0.01

## Discussion

### Contributions:

- Personal network approach shows the complexity of relationship changes
- Different types of transitions related to different changes in personal networks

### Results and interpretation:

- Returning to the family associated with most changes in personal networks
- Change of facility associated with negative effects (more conflict, less face-to-face contact)
- Leaving care to independence: Expected changes did not occur (less support, smaller networks)

### Limitations:

- Non-significant results regarding *change of facility* and *leaving care* likely due to small group size
- Changes in the personal network may not be entirely caused by the transition

# Thank you for your attention!

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