

Effects of transitions on the personal networks of young people in residential care.

A longitudinal comparison of three transitions 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
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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
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Current Study

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

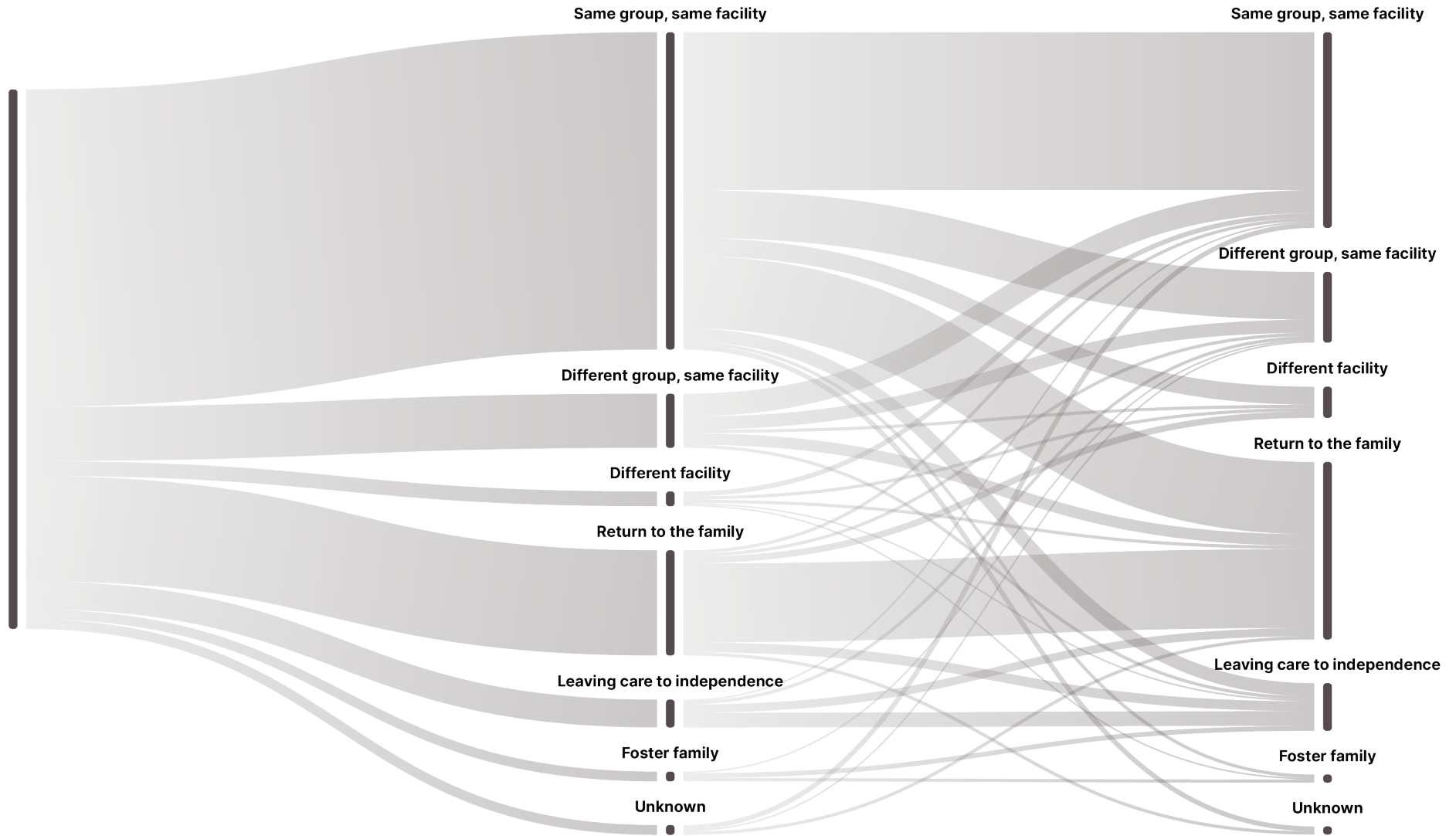
- Application of the personal network approach in a longitudinal research design in RC allows to study network characteristics before and after transitions
 - Taking different types of transitions into account enables a more precise understanding of how each transition affects network dynamics
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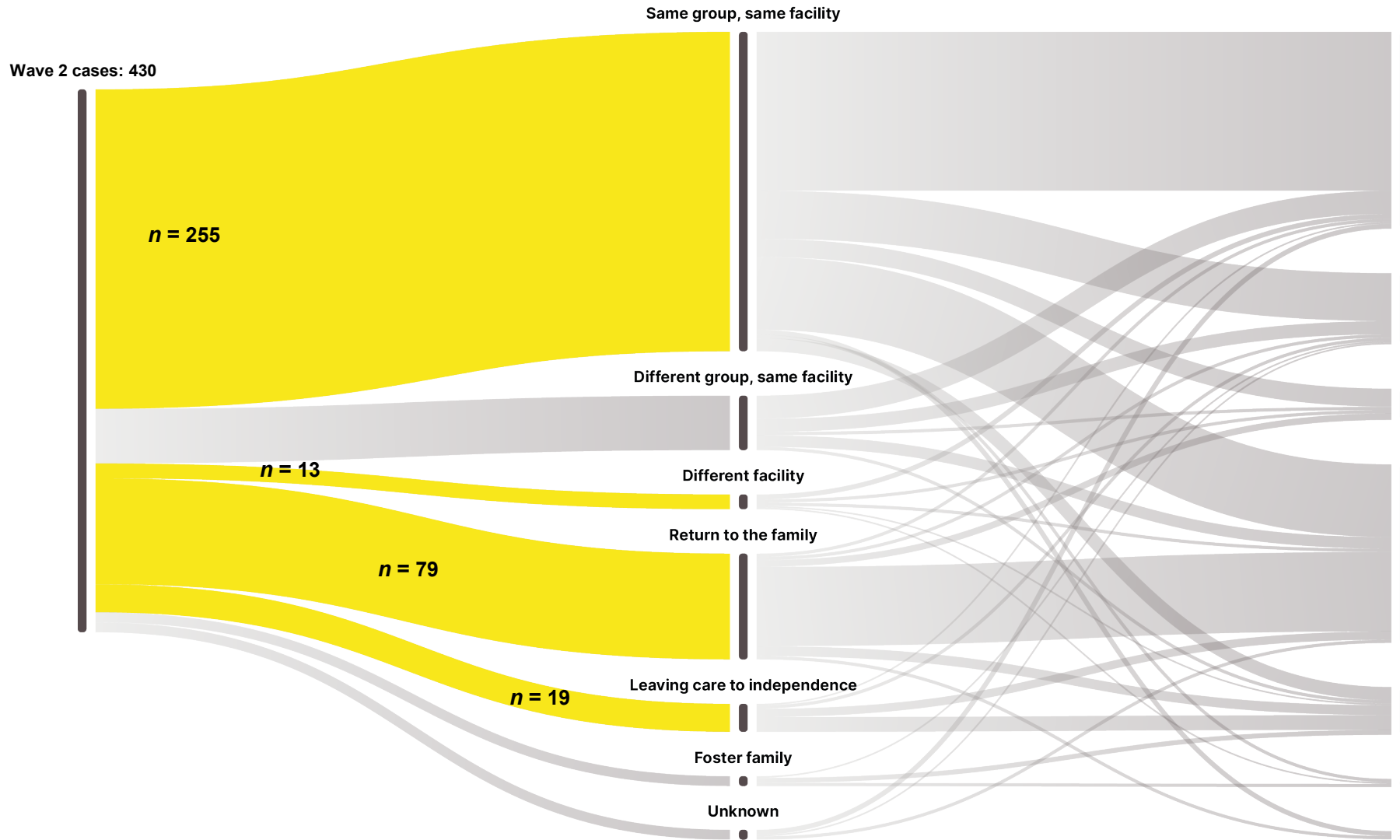
Data and Sample

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%
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Research Instruments

Personal network

Network size:

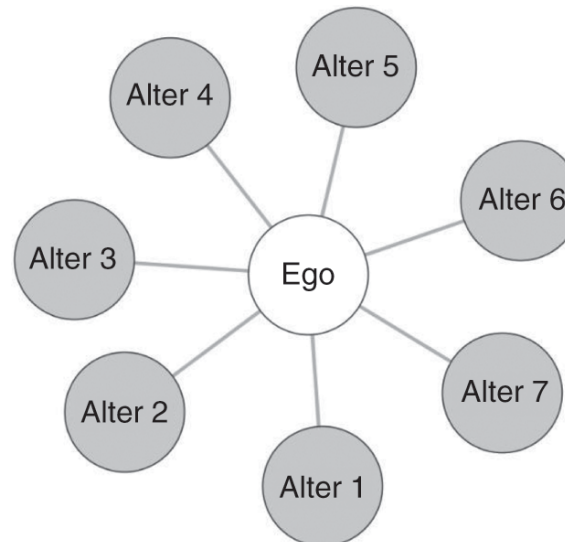
- Name generator (free listing, max. 13 network members)

Network composition:

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

Network structure:

- Support
- Conflict



Name generator

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

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
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Thank you for your attention!

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