

## Turning Point Processes to Higher Education among Care Leavers

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### 1 Introduction

While the most common place for children to grow up is their parents' home, there is sometimes a necessity to remove children from their home, for instance when they are exposed to neglect, physical or sexual abuse within their family. Different kinds of placement are offered for children who cannot continue to live at home. However, in all countries, including Israel and Germany, the state's responsibility for providing care and support ends at a particular point in time. For example, in Israel, the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade is also the end of the time in care. In Germany, supporting young people in care is also connected to their educational situation, but more so to the age of legal adulthood (18 years), at which time such support is terminated in most cases (Pothmann 2011), in spite of the legal right to receive care up to the age of 21.

For a wide range of reasons, care leavers are identified as one of the most disadvantaged groups among young adults (Dixon & Stein, 2005; Pecora, Williams, Kessler, O'Brien, & Emerson, 2006; Wade & Dixon, 2006; Zeller, Zeira, Köngeter, Benbenishty, & Schröer, 2009). Studies worldwide document the difficulties care leavers face during the years after leaving care, including instability in their living places and homelessness (Perez & Romo, 2011; Biehal & Wade, 1996), difficulties in employment (Cook, 1994; Courtney & Dworsky, 2006), severe economic distress and poverty (Buehler, Orme, Post, & Patterson, 2000; Courtney, Dworsky, Ruth, Keller, Havlicek, & Bost, 2005; Merdinger, Hines, Lemon-Osterline, & Wyatt, 2005; Zeira & Benbenishty, 2008) and involvement in anti-social behaviors like using drugs and engaging in criminal activities in higher percentages than in the general population (McDonald, Allen, Westerfeld & Piliavin, 1996; Reilly, 2003).

A particular challenge for care leavers is acquiring higher education (Jackson & Cameron, 2010; Schiff & Benbenishty, 2006). Therefore, an international collaborative project between researchers from Germany and Israel was designed. A core dimension of the project is the analyses of the life stories of care leavers who achieved higher education. In this article, we will explore some issues related to the higher education pathways of care leavers.

Compared to their peers, young people who grew up in out-of-home care have lower high school achievements (Pothmann, 2007; Schiff & Benbenishty, 2006). However, against all odds, a small number of care leavers succeed in entering higher education institutions. Existing research on high achieving care leavers (e.g.: Martin & Jackson 2002) as well as our own interviews show that their preliminary conditions (e.g. family background, traumatic experiences) do not differ from those of other children and youths in care. Moreover, there is no strong evidence that can explain the educational outcome of youths in out-of-home care.

Using a social-pedagogic perspective, addressing social issues rather than individual ones, the focus of our study is to investigate the life stories of care leavers and look for moments or events of change, known as *turning points*<sup>1</sup> (Gilligan, 2009). In the following review, we first highlight the educational situation of young people in care. The concept of turning points is then clarified, before introducing the two case studies reflecting potential turning points in the life stories of two care leavers, currently registered in higher education institutions. In the discussion, we sum up the findings and discuss their implications.

### 1.1 Education in care and after care

Low academic achievements of children in care are often evident before high school (Benbenishty & Shimony, 2012), continue through high school and in addition several studies show that the learning gaps are not limited to the years after high school (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001; Pecora et al., 2006; Schiff & Benbenishty, 2006; Hojer, Johansson, Cameron, & Jackson, 2008). In Germany, however, few studies exist which provide specific evidence about the educational situation of children in care and after care (Bürger, 1990; Pothmann, 2007; Esser 2011). At the same time, current statistical data suggest that under a third of young adults in residential care attended a school, or received vocational training or career-related support when care ended (Köngeter, Schröer, & Zeller, 2008). This indicates, that particularly among the 15-18 year-olds, the number of early school leavers seems high compared to the general population. In Israel as well, few studies have examined the educational situation of children in care and after care. One study examines the educational achievements of children who grew up in care (N=11,882) and compares them to the cohort of children in the population born in the same year in Israel (N=111,456). This study reveals that not more than 22.2% of children in care finished their studies with a matriculation diploma which would enable them to go on to higher education, compared to 42.9% of the general population (Benbenishty & Shimony, 2012). Another study of 160 residential care alumni reveals that only 10% obtained their higher education entrance qualification and only 5% acquired higher education (Schiff & Kusher, 2005).

A recent study conducted in five European countries paints the same picture. For example, in England only 6% were accepted to higher education institutions compared to 25% in the general population. In Denmark, less than 8% completed a first degree at the age of 20, compared to more than 30% in the general population (Jackson & Cameron, 2011).

Given the statistics related to care leavers and higher education attainment, young care leavers who do succeed in achieving higher education present an opportunity to explore their pathways and determine whether anything is to be learned from their experiences. Some studies of care leavers with educational success already exist. Martin & Jackson (2002) found no differences in the backgrounds of high achievers and other care leavers. Stein (2005) highlighted different types of care leavers and what differs between the more successful and less successful ones. For example, care leavers that were more resilient, were found to have more stability and continuity in care and secure attachment relationships. In addition, Merdinger et al. (2005) explored internal factors (e.g. high intelligence and aspirations to be more successful than their parents) and external factors (e.g. stability in high school, role models) that were linked with educational success of care leavers. However, there is no sufficient explanation for the deviation from the expected (un)educational life course of

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, we will initially refer to “turning points” until we present the rationale for the term “turning point processes”.

children in care. The educational success of these care leavers is unexpected and seems to represent unique circumstances worthy of analysis. For this reason, we explore the idea of turning points in the life of children in care as connected to their integration in higher education.

## 1.2 Turning points and turning point processes

According to Havighurst (1963), human behavior during the life course is determined by three different forces: maturation, ego and situation. Maturation, defined as the unfolding of genetic potentials and the ego as the interaction between self and environment, are determined for each person and allow “the possibility of predicting later events and qualities in a person’s life” (p. 27). However, the unpredictability of the situations in which the person will find himself and needs to interact, prevents us from predicting the future. For this reason, the life course of each person is not completely determined but has a direction and follows a probable path. For children, this pathway is often understood as closely connected to the family of origin and social environment.

Life course research, which emphasizes long-term developments in a person’s life plan, exposes the possibility of unexpected changes (cf. Elder, 1999; Laub & Sampson, 2003). Even under very challenging circumstances it is, however, possible to turn adversity into opportunity. Such changes can be characterized as positive turning points (Gilligan, 2009). Turning points are seen as a positive departure from the expected life course. It is not just a shift of life style, but a radical change of a person’s life plan and life perspectives. Often transitions in the life course, like marriage or employment, can be turning points (Laub & Sampson, 2003), but not every transition can be characterized as a turning point.

Typically, turning points are associated with specific events or situations. It is important to note that these are not merely moments of transition from one stage or one role to another. In fact, it is often a single situation or event that may open up the possibility of a turning point, although the sustainability of the effects of such turning points is strongly related to multiple additional factors. Based on the results of Elder (1999) and Werner (1977) which showed that children who overcome adversities are resilient, Stein (2008) connected the concept of turning points to the idea of resilience. While an emerging turning point can be one factor contributing to resilience, resilience itself can increase the odds of a turning point emerging, particularly if such resilience is accompanied by supportive relationships. Children and young people need a secure attachment to at least one caring and significant adult, strong social networks, positive experiences in school or extra-curricular activities and emotional maturity to overcome adversities.

A more detailed model of turning points is described by Gilligan (2009). According to him, four conditions are necessary for a potential turning point: *Opportunity, readiness, agency* and a *sustaining context* (ORASC). If the opportunity for a turning point arises in a specific situation or event, the person must be ready and recognize the given opportunity. Furthermore, the person must be his own agent to take up the opportunity and also find himself in an environment which supports the change. It is clear then, that turning points do not emerge in isolation, but instead emerge through a confluence of multiple factors. In this context, Berglund (2007) names this significant event a turning point *process*.

Typically, turning points are discussed from two perspectives. The first perspective focuses on the effects of turning points, whereby these turning points need to be measurable through objective criteria. Psychological studies tend to highlight changes in behavioral development,

such as overcoming drug abuse (Teruya & Hser, 2010) or criminal behaviors (Laub & Sampson, 2003), while sociological approaches analyze the changes in the structure of life, for example changes in social status (Elder, 1999).

The second perspective concerns the conditions which could enable a turning point. This means individual and environmental factors are critical for creating a turning point. On the one hand, the timing must be right, offering, for example, “a new opportunity to break from a high-risk area” (Stein, 2008, p.36). On the other hand, a person must also be ready to engage such opportunity and take action (Gilligan, 2009). Finally, there must be additional support to make the effect of a turning point a lasting one.

It is possible, however, to articulate a third perspective. Within such third perspective the focus is on the subjective meaning of a turning point for the person himself. Biographical analyses shows that changes in a subjective dimension can be analyzed in narrative data as an internal transformation (Zeller, 2012). This transformation is carried out by a biographical learning process in which the person acquires different coping strategies to deal with the social environment (Zeller & Köngeter, 2012). In this sense a turning point can as well be understood as subjective processes of internal transformation leading to changes in coping strategies and thus can be seen as a *turning point process*.

For the purpose of this paper, turning point processes are understood as representing positive change in the life course of young people. They are typically manifested within transitions that do not necessarily correspond to normatively expected life transitions. On the one hand, turning point processes need to be measurable through objective criteria, but on the other hand, their sustainability depends on the person’s ability to recognize the chance to change and take advantage of it (e.g.: the transformation from chronic failure to success in school).

### **1.3 Research question**

The research described in this article deals with turning point processes concerning the educational career of care leavers. To this end, we present two case studies reflecting potential turning point processes in the life of two care leavers, currently registered in higher education institutions. The research questions underlying our analysis aim to check if the concept of turning point processes could be used to better understand the path of care leavers to higher education. Our approach also explores the underlying characteristics or components that are able to generate turning point processes.

## **2 Method**

The current study is based on biographical analyses of care leavers in higher education. Biographical research provides the opportunity to (re)construct a person’s life from that person’s perspective (Schütze, 2007). This type of research yields narrative data that can be analyzed to study the construction of meaning within the narrated biography (Schütze, 2007). It is possible, therefore, to analyze the subjective meaning of events. Since turning points are linked not just to significant changes in the life course but are also a function of the subjective reconstruction of the event and its’ meaning, it is instructive to look for turning points in autobiographical interviews. At the same time, however, objective components of the life course are also (re)constructable and analysis of such criteria must therefore be incorporated (Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004). Biographical analysis allows us to connect the changes in the objective components with the subjective meaning(s) derived from the narrative analysis. In this way, the concept of turning point processes is substantively enriched.

## 2.1 Sample

As part of an international research project, which focused on higher education among young people aging out of care, we conducted 28 biographical interviews with young care leavers (17 from Germany and 11 from Israel). We have chosen to analyze two interviews in depth for the current article, as they represent different circumstances for turning point processes in the life of care leavers. These different circumstances were revealed immediately, and were part of the first impressions received about the cases. In one case, there were clear indications that one specific moment was the source of change. In the other case, change occurred, but not at a specific point in time. Further on, differences were revealed in the educational performances prior to the hypothesized change (one was an illiterate child, while the other was doing quite well in school).

## 2.2 Data analysis

For the purpose of data analysis, all interviews were recorded and transcribed with the permission of the participants. In the analysis we followed the sequence of steps suggested by Schütze (1983) and started by analyzing the interviews line by line and word by word. According to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we started the analysis with as few prior assumptions about turning points as possible, recognizing that our sensitization of concepts and ideas of possible turning points may well be a factor in our analysis.

## 3 Findings

### 3.1 Paul

Out of the German data, we analyzed the case of Paul.

Paul was born into an uneducated family as the oldest of four siblings. His parents who had been very young at the time of his birth (mother 19 and father 21 years old) grew up with a difficult family background, and were impacted by violence and alcoholism themselves. The family problems continued in Paul's birth-family as his father was violent and addicted to alcohol as well. When Paul was about eight years old, his parents divorced but the circumstances in Paul's family did not improve. His mother was overwhelmed, being responsible for four children and in addition, she had psychological problems herself. The family moved frequently and Paul changed schools a lot. The last change of schools was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, at which point Paul moved into the group home.<sup>2</sup>

Asking Paul for his story, he answered:

“OK (.) yes, well, roughly speaking, I can certainly say that the circumstances why I finally came to the group home are really not so simple, well um [...] it was simply the situation – was simply very difficult for my mother – on top of that, we moved relatively frequently. I went to three different elementary schools and finally also two high schools (Gymnasium<sup>3</sup>) the second high school was when – that was where I at 8<sup>th</sup> grade um I moved into the group

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<sup>2</sup> Given the different structure and organizational context of group care in Germany vs. Israel, we use the term group home to denote group care in Germany and the term residential care in the Israeli context.

<sup>3</sup> The German school system has three main types of high schools, the Gymnasium (an academic high school for students planning to continue at the tertiary education level), the Realschule (a high school sufficient for entering an apprenticeship for clerical jobs), and the Hauptschule (a low-level high school, providing only the minimum education level required by law).

home (...) that's first of all maybe very basically how it came about. um I then helped my sister to join the live-in group one year later. well my sister Tanja she moved in with me then one year later and 1 ½ years after that I once again helped my other sister also to move out ...”

At the beginning of his initial narration the dominant figures are the “not so simple circumstances”. Paul’s difficult background is responsible for him finally ending up in the group home. Suffering from unstable institutional life and insecure relationship to his parents, Paul tells us about his life as a passive person, not participating in the decisions impacting his life and not being able to influence his environment. When Paul moved into the group home, however, the situation begins to change. Before this, his life had been dominated by instability, as he moved frequently and went to many different schools. This instability ends as soon as he moves out from his family home. This is the last change of living-places and also the last change of schools. It is important to note not only the substance of Paul’s narrative, but also the way in which he tells the story. The three second pause and the following upshot “(...) that’s first of all maybe very basically how it came about” shows the end of the sequence not just in the narration but also in a subjective stage of his life. At this point, something new is beginning. The move into the group home appears to be a significant event in his life. From his narration it also appears that this change was a change to a better life or better life conditions. Paul left the difficult circumstances of his birth family to start living in a better environment. Later on in his story, Paul relates that “the move into residential care has been the best decision in my life up to the present day...”. This sequence highlights the importance of this event as a significant moment in Pauls' life.

As Paul continues his story, he explains his follow-up to moving out of home: “...um I then helped my sister to join the live-in group one year later...”. After moving out and the resulting change in his own life, Paul was trying to get control over the family circumstances as well. He wanted to help his siblings to improve their situation, too. Thus, we can see that the change was not just an external and institutional change, just involving the move from one place to another. Instead, this significant event in his life was also related to internal transitions. The formerly suffering, passive person, who was unable to change the family circumstances, reconstitutes himself as an action-taking person by helping his siblings get away from home. Prior to this sequence, Paul provided a passive narrative about his difficult life circumstances: “...how **it** came about...”. Things couldn’t be changed. After the moving out, Paul realized that he could in fact effect change in his life. “...well my sister Tanja she moved in with me then one year later and 1 ½ years after that I once again helped my other sister also to move out...”. At first, he was not able to change the not so simple circumstances even for himself. But the experience of beginning something new leads him to taking family matters into his own hand. Therefore, we can identify the change from a passive suffering person to an active person. In his self-perception, he learned not to blame the circumstances but to be a “self-made man”.

At the same time, however, Paul’s narrative shows that the possibility of moving out did not emerge solely from his own actions; to get to this point he needed help from others:

“(.) that I was able to move out at all I was really very lucky. well I always was surrounded by people who supported me, which I think is a very important criterion if you come from a difficult background that you sort of have people that yah believe in you, I’d say that support and help you (.) and that all started with my former elementary school teacher.”

Moving out of his family home would not have happened if there had not been people in his surroundings who supported him. The first person had been the teacher in his 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, when Paul was 7 years old. This teacher can be seen as an example of a supportive person in moving out of home. In this way, his move to residential care was prepared and accompanied by significant others already years before the event actually happened.

It is important to recognize that the move into the group home was not an entirely positive moment in Paul's life, but was associated with great challenges and difficulties as well. Since he had to change schools once more when moving into the group home, he was again confronted with the challenge of adjusting to a new environment and social scene. Paul was bullied at his new school, and as a result developed psychosomatic problems. In his words, "...it was difficult at first, that is, really very difficult... ". While on the one hand, he experienced moving out of his family home as a relief and as a positive development in his life, many of the circumstances related to this move introduced new challenges. In this context, he benefitted from the support offered by the group home staff, and also by the on-going involvement of his elementary school teacher from grades 1 and 2.

The move into group home had a major impact on Paul's life. As a result, we can call this event a turning point process. This includes the objective dimension of moving from one institutional setting (the family) to another (the group home), and also the subjective dimension of recognizing in himself the capacity to change his life by taking action.

### 3.2 Michael

From the Israeli sample, we selected the case of Michael, and similarly to our analysis of the case of Paul, we looked for an event, which had a significant impact on the course of his life.

Michael, along with his parents and his older sister, immigrated to Israel at the age of 4 from the former Soviet Union (FSU). He ran away from his home when he was 5, after his mother tried to kill him. Shortly thereafter, he moved to a temporary placement which he called "an orphanage" until the age of 7. During this time, he also lived in a foster family for 4 months. He said that he left them because "they wanted a doll child and I wasn't a Barbie". At the age of 7 (and probably after the staff in the temporary placement realized that they couldn't find a foster family for him) he moved to a residential treatment facility which he described as a place "for children who didn't fit in any other facilities". At this facility, he learned to swim in a course that took place outside of the facility.

"In (name of the care institution) I learned to read and write, because I went out and was involved in swimming and saw that I couldn't understand what was written around me. I realized that the guys around me can, know how to read and write and understand, bringing all kinds of sweets, all sorts of these things that I don't understand what, what's going on, so I said "there's no way that I don't, **Don't know!!!** (his emphasis) so I decided. I grabbed a few people, caretakers or...so I learned to read and write at the age of twelve."

While Michael was already in residential care, there was a significant moment which had impact on his future life. Participating in a swimming course outside the residential care facility was an event, which may eventually have contributed to his participating in higher education. There, Michael met with 'regular' children, and realized that they were able to read and write, so he decided to learn to read and write at a very late age. The experience of meeting other children outside of the care facility gave him the opportunity to relate to a new social environment. Therefore, Michael realized that his inability to read and write was

unusual given his age. Later, as a reaction to this event he reveals his own agency when he decided to learn how to read and write in order to be like the other children in the swimming course. Michael became active in his efforts to become literate: "**I grabbed** (our emphasis) a few people, caretakers" and by this he succeeded as he" learned to read and write at the age of twelve ". This shows his own agency in taking control over his life and making the transition from an illiterate child to a literate one.

In Michael's narration, we also see that the change was related to others and therefore must be seen as a process: Before the event, someone in the residential care helped Michael to register and get to the swimming course. Later, Michael was affected by his peers. Then, after he made the decision to become literate, he still needed external help. The ability to read and write did not evolve out of thin air. Some caretakers helped him to learn to read and write. Therefore, his change from an illiterate child to a literate one was supported and accompanied by others before and after the encounters with children out of care.

Moreover, after this change there was a need for further support from others to preserve the change and finally to lead Michael to higher education. In this residential care facility, Michael developed a close relationship with one staff member who became a "significant other" and a "role model" for him:

"He took me under his wings. [...] I was with him at the time when I stayed in the residential care, on holidays, on weekends, he was my spot, my bed, and he was a man, the man who educated me, passed the adolescence with me".

This staff member inspired Michael to strive for higher education from a very young age. Throughout the interview, Michael mentioned this guide as a stable source of support that continues even today. During Michael's time in the residential care facility, the guide also acquired a higher education and inspired Michael to follow in his path.

#### **4 Discussion**

Given the low percentages of care leavers who successfully integrate into higher education, the question arises as to what makes the difference for those who succeed versus those who do not (Merdingner et al., 2005). One possible answer is the emergence of *turning points* or *turning point processes*. As Stein (2008) suggests, these care leavers' resilience could be derived from turning points in their life. Stein (2005) also describes a group of care leavers called "Moving on", which functions similarly to youth who live with their parents (in the education aspect as well as others aspects). He explains their success as resulting from social support and positive experiences throughout the life course. These experiences may sometimes generate a positive change. In the current article, we found that the idea of turning points or turning point processes is a useful one as we analyzed the narratives of two care leavers who were successful in entering higher education.

As mentioned, in both presented case studies, we can determine crucial moments in the life of the care leavers. These moments represent a significant change in the expected life course. For this, it is possible to name the events themselves positive turning points (Gilligan, 2009). However, the nameable event (like getting into group home or participating in the swimming course outside the care facility) did not take place in an isolated moment or context, but instead has clear antecedents and also clear follow-ups. Therefore, we prefer to speak of turning point *processes* and not about an event (Berglund, 2007).



In spite of significant differences in the life stories of Paul and Michael, our analysis of turning point processes in their lives reveals considerable structural and process similarities, which can be articulated within Gilligan's (2009) ORASC framework:

The turning point process itself can be related to a significant and single event, which is also named by the interviewees themselves. This event opens the opportunity for a possible change. Because of this, Gilligan (2009) speaks of an arising opportunity. In Paul's case this event is the moment when he left his mother's home to live in a more stable environment (the group home). For Michael, the opportunity was in the moment when he joined a swimming team outside the care facility, alongside children without welfare backgrounds.

Furthermore, we can identify a biographical learning process (Zeller, 2012), which broadly corresponds to what Gilligan (2009) labels as the need of readiness by the person, although in our analysis this readiness represents not so much a condition but an emerging process. In both cases, we can see the transformation of self-perception as an internal change. Both Paul and Michael undergo a transformation from a passive person to an active formative one. Paul takes action to impact his family members based on his own experience in the group home, and Michael initiates the process of transformation from an illiterate to a literate child. The biographical learning process which leads to the internal transformation of self is not an event which happens without agency. Being ready for change is manifested by the person's resolve to take action himself. Both boys demonstrate their agency within these transformations. But, the turning point process is not a self-fulfilling prophecy. Corresponding to Gilligan's (2009) concept of a sustaining context as a necessary condition to create a turning point process, the cases we have presented lead to the conclusion that this sustaining context consists of two dimensions: The change has to be accompanied and prepared with the help of significant others (e.g. Mead, 1934), and the main event (or opportunity) happens as a result of the participation of other persons and their involvement. In the case of Paul, his teacher of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade was important in assisting and supporting him. For Michael it is not just the caretakers in the residential care facility that helped him to participate in a swimming course outside the facility, but also the peers in his swimming class.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the positive change would likely not be a lasting one without the on-going supports for the transformation on the part of significant others. Paul was supported by the staff in the group home to overcome his difficult situation in school. Also, the significant others who prepared him for the change did not disappear (the teacher). Michael found in the group of peers at his swimming class a constant personal environment of literal youths to compare himself with. Additionally, the staff in the residential care facility supported him in the process of learning how to read and write after his decision to do so. His motivation to keep learning was ultimately maintained by his special relationship to one staff member, whose role modeling actions in terms of learning and education served to reinforce that motivation.

Overall, using the method of a biographical approach is useful in analyzing the biographical meaning of a potential turning point process. It is not just the event that provides for the opportunity to change. The case of Michael highlights that a significant moment to change does not need to be related to an institutional change, but that opportunities arise out of seemingly less dramatic contexts and new opportunities in life. In the case of Michael, the event of the potential turning point process took place when he participated in the swimming course, and the preparation of the internal transformation started. Therefore, the opportunity for the potential turning process arose when he was out of the residential care facility. For

Paul, in contrast, the main event is located in the moment when he moved into the residential care facility. His move was prepared for a long time before the main event started.

### **5 Implication for practice and research**

In the eyes of the public, residential care is highly stigmatizing, and out-of-home care is mostly considered as a 'last resort' option. However, our findings indicate that residential care plays an important part in generating turning point processes, which lead to a positive change in life. It is therefore important that such stories of success be brought to the knowledge of the public, and it is crucial that residential care facilities be made aware of them, and improve their self-esteem.

In this article, turning point processes are revealed to be phenomena that are identified in retrospect. They prove to be turning point processes only post factum. It is therefore difficult to point clear practical implications in this case. Care facilities and single caregivers should make an effort to create opportunities which may eventually generate turning point processes: positive experiences, significant others, extra-curricular activities, etc. Anything that is out of the ordinary and can make the young people feel special. Ongoing encouragement and support is no less important in creating a supportive environment.

In terms of future research, the importance of adopting a biographical approach in analyzing life stories of children in care was revealed. In this article, we focused on biographical learning, which proved to be a necessary element of turning point processes. However, further research is required to find and evaluate the correlation between biographical learning and academic aspirations and achievements.

### **6 Limitations**

The current analysis is based on two cases, and focuses specifically on turning point processes related to the education pathways of young care leavers. Therefore, it can be assumed that more possibilities could be discovered if further cases are analyzed, or if the focus were on turning point processes related to aspects of care leaver experiences outside of their educational pathways. For this reason, our model of turning point processes is just a model of the two analyzed cases and does not claim to be representative of a general model of turning point processes. Therefore, whether or not it is meaningful to analyze turning point processes with respect to one particular aspect of care leaver lives (such as educational pathways) at the exclusion of other aspects (such as family life, self-sufficiency, personal well-being, etc.) is an open question.

It is important to note that there seem to be cases without any hint of turning point processes in life. Such processes may therefore not be a precondition for deviations from probable life courses. At the same time, one might contemplate whether turning point processes may be related to events that are not easily identified and that lack specific boundaries.

It should also be mentioned that this is not a comparative analysis aimed to find out differences between Germany and Israel. Although differences may be assumed to exist between the educational systems and the welfare systems of the two countries, we focused on the similarities in out-of-home care experiences. This means that the two cases could have been taken from either one of the countries.

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