Care-leaving Research in South Africa

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Introduction

- Youth in South Africa
  - Poor quality education
  - High unemployment
  - HIV and Aids
  - Poverty
  - Inequality
  - Race and gender

Children and care in SA

- Population of 52 million,
  - of whom 36% (18.6m) are children,
  - of whom 21% (4m) are single or double orphans
- Traditional/indigenous social protection systems (African 'family/clan) are fragmenting/exhausted
- 512k are in formal foster care (mostly kinship)
  - Probably mostly due to orphanhood
- 21k are in residential care
  - Probably mostly due to abuse or behavioural issues
- Very little administrative data, poor data integrity

Greetings from South Africa
Care-leaving in South Africa

- Virtually no legislation or policy mandating or funding aftercare.
- Virtually no legislation mandating or funding preparation for leaving care.
- Until 2012, almost no research on leaving care in SA.

Primary SA research project

- Growth Beyond the Town (with Girls and Boys Town SA)
  - Rolling cohort longitudinal mixed methods study
  - Over 100 participants enrolled.
  - Collecting six-year outcome data over the coming months.
  - Baseline: resilience, history, readiness.
  - Annual: independent living outcomes, CL narrative.

Research themes

- Care-leaving outcomes over time.
- Resilience enablers of improved outcomes.
- Contribution of possible selves to outcomes.
- Gender comparisons.
- Agency exercised by care-leavers.
- Disability (intellectual).
- Managed opportunities for independence.
- Development of ILPs.

SA findings

- Outcomes are not (much) worse than many other countries, e.g. NEET.
- Personal agency and informal networks are key enablers, rather than formal services.
- Ubuntu is an indigenous version of interdependence.
- In the absence of aftercare and with limited options for extended care, intervention focus is on preparation for leaving care and building a bridge into the first year out of care.

SA research agenda

- Ongoing longitudinal and outcomes research.
- Comparative studies using same methods/tools.
  - Ghana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria.
  - School leavers.
- Design, testing and evaluation of interventions.
- Greater engagement of youth in programme design & research.
- More focused studies:
  - Foster care.
  - Indigenous knowledge and practices.
Translating research into practice

- Gauteng Care-leaving Forum
  - Hosted by Girls and Boys Town SA
  - 70+ participants per meeting: social workers, child and youth care workers, managers
  - Exchange of research and practice
  - Developing practice guidelines
    - Based on practice wisdom
    - Triangulated with evidence and theory

SA's regional contribution

- Africa Network of Care-leaving Researchers
  - www.careleaving.com
  - 39 members from 10 African countries
  - Themed issue of Emerging Adulthood on care-leaving in Africa, in 2019
  - Workshop for 25 African scholars in Jan 2019
    - In partnership with QUB and UJ
    - Building capacity for research and publication
    - Developing a research agenda for Africa
    - Conference: SA, Africa, Global North

Partners

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