The Complex Role of the Tutor for Autonomy in Care Leaving Processes[1]

Roberto Zarcone[a], Elisabetta Di Giovanni[b]

[a][b] Department of Psychology
Educational Science and Human Movement
University of Palermo
Italy

Abstract

This article discusses some of the critical elements related to the taking care of adolescent leaving care. To this end, Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological perspective will be adopted, taking up suggestions from the notion of chronosystem and applying it to boys and girls leaving care. In this way, it emerges how the process of building autonomy and the transition to adulthood does not begin at the age of 18, but is already built up during the child's care. In the light of these considerations, the key role of the autonomy tutor is analyzed with respect to the national experimentation conducted in Italy, highlighting the tools and skills he/she should have.

Keywords: Autonomy, mentoring, care leaving, adulthood

1. Introduction

Reaching the age of majority represents for young people a moment of transition full of expectations, ideally representing the moment of entry into adulthood. However, some authors (Fabbri, Melacarne, 2012; Iori, 2012) have already pointed out that nowadays Italian young adults have to face new challenges and problems if compared to previous generations: precarious working conditions, uncertainties about one's future and project prospects, as well as a certain uncertainty regarding one's existential and emotional dimension, on a personal, couple and parenting level (Pandolfi, 2019), certainly amplified by the economic and social consequences of the current Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, in Italy there is a significant increase in the age at which young people leave their family of origin with a consequent relative long economic dependence (Saraceno, 2017); in this sense, Istat data (2014, 2019) confirm that more than half of young people aged 20 to 34, single or not married, live with at least one parent, with a shift forward in the main stages of life and processes of autonomy. The transition to emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Driscoll, 2017) therefore represents a regulatory evolutionary crisis, that is, a moment of rupture and discontinuity punctuated by life events and developmental tasks leading the no longer adolescent towards the world of adults. The situation is different for young people who, at the age of eighteen, live on the basis of an out-of-family judicial provision, i.e. in foster care or in the residential service system, for which we are witnessing the reverse trend: quickly becoming adults at the expense of uncertainties and uncertainties in planning, work and emotion (Driscoll, 2017; Pandolfi, 2019). This condition involves a contraction of the transition to adulthood by amplifying the possible psychosocial risk factors capable of leading to potential "journeys of exclusion" (Atwool, 2016): care leaving can make the multiple transitions, typical of those passing from adolescence to adulthood, from the perspective of emerging adulthood, more complex (Gilligan, 2015): the transitions towards the formation of one's own family could be complex, fast and at the same time vulnerable (Radey, et al., 2016), as well as the transition to the world of work or a higher education system may not take place (Gilligan, 2015; Driscoll, 2017), effectively laying the groundwork for mental health-related frailties (Baidawi, Mendes, Snow, 2014; Butterwoth et al., 2017). These dynamics are closely related to the identity and narrative self of each young adult who is preparing for life, as well as to the internal and above all external resources made available by the respective social context. In this sense it is believed that the care leaving process is strongly punctuated by the temporal dynamics. In fact, adopting Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological perspective, we realize that the question of autonomy and resilience is immediately configured as a chronosystemic action, that is, it requires the scanning of steps for identification, construction, connection, and negotiation (Di Giovanni, Zarcone, 2022) of those external resources essential for a conscious, self-determined (Groinig, Sting, 2019) and self-fulfilling autonomy (Lemus et al., 2017). In this perspective, the role of coordinating this chronosystem belongs to the tutor of autonomy, whose main interdisciplinary skills and knowledge will be sought in this article.

---

[1] Roberto Zarcone has written paragraphs 2, 4, 5. Elisabetta Di Giovanni has written paragraphs 1, 3.

2. *Care leaving: critical issues and discontinuity*

Today there are different guidelines in the reception and protection of minors with respect to the community mechanism: on the one hand, the educational community is seen as a last resort to draw upon when the hope of adoption or fostering fades; on the other hand, the community is seen as a link in a chain of interventions inserted within a network of support and assistance programs, affirming the need to transform the panorama of hospitality in residential communities in general according to a multisystemic, multidisciplinary, multiprocessual and holistic perspective (Zullo, Bastianoni, Taurino, 2008; Bastianoni, Taurino, 2009).

This latter orientation is the one prevalent in Italy, as the work of a residential community tends to engage a plurality of local subjects involved in sharing projects and interventions (Folgheraiter, 1994, 2006; Bastianoni, Taurino, 2009), while presenting a rich variety of organizational and educational models. The factors that influence the intervention of a residential community are therefore to be traced on several levels that highlight the very close individual-environment relationship. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ''process-person-context-environment'' model is therefore suitable for understanding the complexity of the processes and paths move by the operators, preserving the complexity and multidimensionality of the person and highlighting the reciprocity of relationships, the influence of more remote contexts on changes in individual behavior. The author of the socio-ecological perspective identifies as many as six systems interacting with each other in the growth process of the subjects, in particular:

- The ontosystem is understood as the set of biological dispositions (genetic and physical) and personal psychological characteristics, such as skills and experiences (Bronfenbrenner, Morris, 2006; Tudge et al., 2009).
- The microsystem consists of the direct and reciprocal relationships that the subject has directly with himself, with the physical environment and others at home, at school, in the community.
- The mesosystem is composed of the relationship between two or more different parts of the same microsystem, or of links existing between two or more environmental situations in which the subject actively participates. It is therefore configured as a system of microsystems that forms or extends each time the subject transits into a new environmental situation.
- The exosystem consists of systems and social environments that interact indirectly on the subject, influencing the people who revolve around him.
- In the macrosystem reside cultural models, traditions, belief systems, norms and policy systems, as well as shared social practices.
- The chronosystem, that is the temporal variable of these systems, constitutes a further ecological element in which the person, his/her environments and the interrelationships between them change over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Tudge, et al., 2009).

In fact, it should be emphasized that the set of community interventions has a planning and collective dimension (Bastianoni, Baiamonte, 2014), articulating on the one hand the synergies of the various actors involved in taking charge and, on the other, marking the times, the objectives and actions of intervention in relation to the times of the user. As can be understood, the variable time is central in the residential community precisely from the structural point of view, as a relational time, in which factors relating to the time spent by the minor in a residential community, the experiences and internal mentalizations of the user intersect, the cultural, theoretical and operational models of educators and the team, the presence of re-elaboration spaces/times in training and supervision settings (Bastianoni, Taurino, 2009; Bastianoni, Ciriello, Fucili, 2016); as well as in how much planning time within which resources are built in terms of skills and competences for the child's future (Bastianoni, Baiamonte, 2014). Relational time constitutes the place for narrating stories that structure events, connecting the events of one's life within a frame of personal meaning concerning the Self (Bastianoni, Taurino, 2007) in which the different lives are linked in chronological relationships: the past is linked to the present and this in turn to the future (Bastianoni, Ciriello, Fucili, 2016). Going deeper, relational time, which articulates users, educators and communities, is marked by specific moments that constitute phases of rupture and discontinuity (Ward, 2011, Refaeli et al., 2017). These, in turn, settle in the narrative self of the young guests, causing identity fragility that can undermine the process towards autonomy.

The first moment of rupture is certainly constituted by the moment the minor enters the residential community: at that moment the action of the operators is aimed at setting up a welcoming process aimed at familiarizing the new guest with the new context, making the stranger as familiar as possible and at the same time facilitate adaptation into a system different from the usual one (Bastianoni, Ciriello, Fucili, 2016). This discontinuity is followed by those related to any sudden school changes, having experienced forms of multiple assignments, as well as having been suddenly moved from one community to another, thus fueling feelings of insecurity and discontinuity (Ward, 2011).

However, it must be considered that moments of discontinuity are not only potential factors of identity risk, but in some cases they can constitute opportunities for growth and openness (Refaeli et al., 2017), as well as an important dimension in the processes of supporting autonomy since educational work with newly-18s requires interventions necessarily different from those carried out in the community, passing from protection and care to the empowerment of active citizenship and personal autonomy (Zullo, 2016). Finally, the turning of the eighteenth year of age constitutes a further critical moment, as the moment in which the obligation on the part of social services to support the protection paths towards users lapses, with the consequent risk of social exclusion, poverty and deviance. For care leavers, the critical element lies in facing further crises and developmental challenges connected with the current evolutionary condition and at the same time connected with the adversities experienced in the past (Gilligan, 2019). Care leavers are in that phase of development characterized by the turning point, that is, from the transition from adolescence to adulthood: the transition to adulthood is complex for those who live in the community since the neighbors, who leave the assistance system, are required to become adults at an early age, despite planning, work and emotional uncertainties and insecurities, configuring psychosocial frailties often amplified by multiple traumatic experiences. For them, the exiting from the community system is configured as a "window of both opportunity and vulnerability" (Obradović, Burt, Masten, 2006, p. 343) which accelerates and compresses the transition process towards adulthood (Stein, 2012) with outcomes that may vary in relation to the experience and the restorative and supportive resources put into play during the hospital stay in the community. The scientific literature (Stein, Munro, 2008; Dixon, 2008; Driscoll, 2013, 2017) converges in highlighting the risks associated with social exclusion and bankruptcy life outcomes, strictly related to the lack of an integrated system of services capable of guaranteeing the continuity of educational accompaniment and financial support interventions (Pandolfi, 2019), especially towards those subjects defined as most vulnerable (Bastianoni, Zullo, 2012). Furthermore, also at an international level, several authors (Stein, Munro, 2008; Dixon 2008; Calheiros, Garrido, Rodrigues 2009; Barbarotto, Zanuso 2010; Driscoll, 2017) have long highlighted how people, who have experienced in their youth the transition from residential services to adulthood, show a below-average level of education, health, well-being, job placement and economic independence compared to their peers. These factors combine to define various risk conditions such as social exclusion, deviance, delinquency, unemployment, homelessness, the development of various forms of psychopathology, drug addiction and early parenting (Premoli, 2009; Driscoll, 2017). The causes of these factors can be traced back not only to the dysfunctional and traumatic relational experiences already considered, but also to the many possible gaps in residential intervention and the lacking, or sometimes absence, of social and economic resources put in place by administrations and policy makers. after reaching the age of majority and therefore leaving residential paths (Zullo, 2016). Leaving the care circuit should be a process similar to that of any young person becoming an adult. The transition to adulthood is already complex and difficult today even for the population of young people who have a supportive family (Fabbri, Melacarne, 2012; Iori, 2012; Sareceno, 2017) due to the growing job insecurity and the consequent uncertainty about future and project prospects (conditions today aggravated by the social repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic). Care leavers have to get by on their own very early and usually without family support. While the lengthening of educational pathways and the prolongation of the juvenile phase have led to considering the concept of "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, 2000) as a separate transitional phase, in which young adults undertake biographical experiments, test themselves and undertake educational paths that involve risks and reorientation, the life situation of care leavers generally leaves no room for this experimentation. They are required to make a rapid transition to adult status; "an instant adulthood" (Sulimani-Aidan, 2018, p. 71), which also entails a restriction of their life options (see Arnett, 2007; Refaeli 2017). There is therefore a growing discrepancy between their life situation and that of their peers in the general population, with inevitable structural disadvantages with regard to education and employment (see Cameron et al., 2018). Consequently, since the eighteenth birthday does not come suddenly for both minors and operators (Bastianoni, Zullo, 2012), the residential community's primary interest seems to be the achievement of autonomy (Pandolfi, 2015), which is considered above all as personal and economic independence, with all the design consequences derive from it, since it is the result of a complex process where the sphere of personal securities and that of emotional and relational skills intertwine to that assumption of responsibility indispensable for the management of an adult life (Bertolini, Caronia, 1999; Pandolfi, 2015). This aspect has repercussions on the pedagogical level, as the operators take on an orientation task (Vitale, 2012) which becomes the scene of clashes, negotiations of needs, dreams, different and discordant expectations between operators, users and family of origin.

Furthermore, the literature (Stein, 2012; Bastianoni, Zullo, 2012; Glynn, Mayock, 2019; Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2020; Pandolfi et al., 2020) has already identified some main factors which contribute to defining not only resilient trajectories, but also the success of community intervention by articulating the interventions in domains relating to the development of personal identity, to school, training and work,

To the same path of reception in the community and in foster care as well as the transition phase from the protected context to autonomy. In particular, the protection factors identified are:

- having experienced a good experience of care and reception in the community or in foster care;
- awareness of the reasons for entering the community;
- having lived relational experiences with educators or foster parents in non-institutional / institutionalizing terms, but in terms of meaningful relationships and trust, clarity and transparency capable of consolidating secure attachment styles;
- having experienced involvement and active participation in decision-making processes, in one's own educational project and in the evaluation of the objectives achieved;
- having acquired the practical skills necessary for managing daily life independently;
- the gradual planning of leaving the community, so that the children do not suddenly feel left to themselves;
- the achievement of a good level of self-esteem and self-efficacy;
- the reworking and acceptance of one's personal history;
- the presence of a good relational and social network;
- the presence of significant adult references, also maintaining the continuity of the bonds of trust established during the reception period;
- opportunities for job placement and academic success;
- educational and economic support after leaving the community;
- the development of customized projects to accompany autonomy.

Building adulthood as a goal on the part of the residential community is a complex work as a "systemic tangle" (Demetrio, 1990) in which the user's personal experience is intertwined with psychosocial expectations, therefore it is configured as a task specific evolutionary not simple, not banal, never obvious or taken for granted: «Adulthood is the outcome and the result of the mundane part of us», taking up the words of Demetrio, «the slow initiation to it sanctions the fulfillment of our biological, social, affective growth, as a contribution due to belonging to the species and to the historicity of our being there [...]» (2005).

3. *The tutor for autonomy in Italian experimental context*

The elements of complexity expressed so far show how it is increasingly necessary to promote the experimentation of integrated projects aimed at accompanying girls and boys towards autonomy when leaving the reception paths, through measures to support consciously their daily life and life choices oriented towards education, vocational training or access to the labor market (Driscoll, 2013, 2017; Refaeli et al., 2017; Lemus et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is noted that it is the information and experiences re-elaborated by those who have left the welcome path that constitute clear reference points for the design lines (Pandolfi, 2015; Glynn, Mayock, 2019; Groinig, Sting, 2019). The conclusion of a protection project within the community is a significant moment in the experience of the children, who need to be adequately prepared to face this passage and to have the possibility to renegotiate the terms of the relationship in the post-reception in the direction of continuity. Clearly, autonomy is a gradual conquest that begins before the eighteenth candle goes out (Bastianoni, Zullo, 2012). On the one hand, it is necessary to build internal resources, in terms of safety, self-esteem, self-efficacy, skills, competences and so on; on the other hand, it is necessary to intercept external resources: economic, social, training, work. Furthermore, each of these external resources, in line with M. Ungar's socio-ecological perspective of resilience (2020), must be modulated, that is, presented, connected and negotiated in its meanings and opportunities (Di Giovanni, Zarcone, 2022), in relation to the specific expectations and characteristics of each beneficiary. In this process, the individual interviews with the young care leaver, aware and involved, constitute a valid starting point in the drafting of the project, together with the involvement of educators, social services, employment centers, as well as the foster family and, if the user deems it appropriate, even the family of origin (if the specific case allows their involvement). Consequently, the construction of the autonomy project becomes a participatory and shared path with the direct beneficiaries, involving both the formal network and the informal reference network. In Italy, the attention paid to the tutor for the autonomy of the care leaver is growing. This figure, established within the *Care Leavers* national experimentation, constitutes a reference figure and continuity between life in the community and the progressive process of leaving, thus carrying out an accompanying function that does not overlap or replace other professional figures (educators and social workers). The tutor for autonomy is conceived as a third key figure with respect to territorial and innovative services; therefore he/she assumes a function of accompaniment and mentoring in support of the beneficiaries, strengthening identity and relational resources to facilitate experiences capable of responding to the new evolutionary tasks required within a transition phase that implies processes of re-elaboration and taking awareness of the decisions to be made for one's future.

In this sense he / she carries out work both on individuals and with groups of beneficiaries, to facilitate the creation of helping relationships between peers and opportunities for reflection and participatory evaluation on experimentation, thus favoring the full protagonism of the children (Pandolfi et al., 2020). The autonomy tutor plays a pivotal role not only in the handling of the paperwork, but also in the offer of associative experiences for young care leavers (Pandolfi, 2019), or opportunities to expand the network of relationships with other reference adults, other boys and girls who live or have had the same experience of care leaving. It is necessary to highlight how the very concept of autonomy presents quite a few critical issues. Although it is considered a normative educational goal closely related to the learning of life skills, decision-making skills, the acquisition of responsible social behavior and so on (Nagy, 2018), as Wolf (2002) notes «Considering educational plans (helping plans) which are directed to youth, transition to autonomy emerges everywhere» (p. 9). This thematic transversality potentially makes any event internal or external to the community an opportunity for autonomy, the imposition of which through hierarchical and heterodirected educational structures risk arousing opposing counter-reactions (Nagy, 2018; Bastianoni, Zullo, Taurino, 2012). Therefore, although it is important to talk about autonomy even before the age of 18, in order to be realized, it requires educational settings that are different from the normal educational community for minors, generally characterized by constantly present educators (Zullo, 2019).

As Pandolfi et al. (2020) note, the experimentation also implies a paradigm shift in the relationship between services and subjects received in the reception system because it requires operators and services to change their representation of the beneficiaries to be no longer considered as subjects (ex-minors) recipients of protection and protection measures, but rather co-constructors of their future. Services and operators are therefore called upon to listen and accompany processes of release and autonomy by interconnecting and systematizing (through individualized projects) all the resources present at the local level that can be mobilized in favor of care leavers (among these, first of all, RdC, Youth Guarantee and the measures of the Right to Education, and the grant for autonomy provided for by the Trial). The tutor for autonomy, consequently, is committed to supporting the aims of the national experimentation underway since 2019 in Italy, as well as individualized projects for the beneficiary care leavers involved; in particular (Ministero del Lavoro e Politiche Sociali, & Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze, 2019), he/she:

- Stimulates self-knowledge.
- Stimulates the ability to relate and communicate with others.
- Helps develop self-study strategies.
- Helps to research and implement job placement.
- Suggest activities and materials.
- Provides methodological support.
- Collaborate in the planning and verification of activities.
- Performs mediation functions.
- Promote, organize and manage group activities.
- Supports the child in achieving the project objectives by stimulating self-monitoring.
- Promote all actions necessary for health promotion
- Promotes the participation and active protagonism of children from both an individual and collective perspective.
- It supports the young person in the acquisition and consolidation of practical skills in managing daily life.
- Evaluates, in progress, the progress of the autonomy path, in comparison with other professional figures.

The creation of structured groups or local associations of care leavers is considered a highly significant result capable of ensuring sustainability in the future of the experimentation and broadening the positive impacts of the work carried out at the local level. The tutor for autonomy is therefore also responsible for this process of change and he/she needs to be supported by other governance bodies. In practice, he/she supports the territorial services and the institutional figures already present in the support network of the care leavers, moving in close connection with the services that maintain the reference of the accompaniment project towards autonomy, as well as with the other emotional and social of the boy. Some of the most important tasks consists in helping the care leaver in the definition and temporal declination of the project for the autonomy supported with the economic resources of the project; in assisting the care leaver in the implementation of the project by providing information, organizational indications, to support for the identification of solutions to practical difficulties (e.g. access to the benefits of the right to study or difficulties in carrying out practices for internships, etc...); in checking with the boy the progress of the project; in facilitating the care leaver in maintaining relationships with adults (social worker, foster family, educators of the communities) to whom the child has been entrusted until the age of majority; in being a point of reference in relation to the child's personal difficulties and facilitate contact with any competent services or other resources present at the local level; in encouraging opportunities for comparison between boys and girls who share the same experience; in acting as a link between national technical assistance and local contacts; in ensuring the compilation of the monitoring and evaluation

tools by the child and other key figures; in supporting the child in the use of the self-organization tools proposed by the experimental project, for example the expense diary; in participating in network meetings at the local level; in participating in training and monitoring seminars organized by technical assistance at national or local level.

4. The tutor for autonomy complex role: knowledge and tools

The role played by the tutor for autonomy, as described by the national experimentation, is clearly complex and polyvalent, requiring interdisciplinary training capable of accommodating different pedagogical and psychological perspectives. In order to be able to plan paths of autonomy, as rightly already highlighted Pandolfi et al. (2020), a thorough understanding of the following theoretical perspectives is required:

- the *bio-ecological perspective of human development* (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), which makes it possible to consider the development of the young care leaver as a dynamic interaction between nodes of a network that winds between the various systems of life, family and social, involving their mutual influence;
- the *needs-forces and capabilities perspective* (Sen, 2017), which makes it possible to identify the effectiveness of public policies in their ability to activate people through co-constructed and participatory planning;
- the *perspective of development tasks and passions* (Pietropolli Charmet, 2010), which suggests that in planning interventions, the changes and developmental challenges that characterize the path to adulthood should be considered, enhancing the talents and passions of each one;
- the *perspective of growth as exploration and research* (Laffi, 2016), which stimulates educational planning to build interventions that know how to measure and recalibrate themselves on the basis of the world view of boys and girls;
- the *perspective of resilience* (Cyrulnik, Malaguti, 2005; Vanistendael, Lecomte, 2000), which refers to the capacity for positive reorganization of one's life, despite the difficulties and traumas experienced, which is built through the interaction between protective and individual, family and environmental risk;
- the *perspective of empowerment and participation*, which supports the ability of individuals to define the terms of their life planning both as individuals and as groups acting within social communities that contribute to change as protagonists.

Among these theoretical perspectives of particular interest, in our opinion, is the one attributable to resilience. In fact, this perspective can be further explored on a pedagogical level by welcoming the perspective of resilience tutors (Cyrulnik, Malaguti, 2005), that is particularly significant adults, capable of helping subjects in the construction of a sense of reality through processes of signification that allow understandable domains of reality that are still incomprehensible (the handling of paperwork, the contractual jungle when signing an employment contract, etc.). This role is closely related to the socio-ecological perspective of M. Ungar (2020), for which resilience is configured as a double process of *navigating* towards resources made available by the environment, which must be available and accessible (and on this accountability falls mainly on institutions and governance systems); and, on the other hand, the *negotiation* of these resources in ways that are culturally and subjectively significant for the subjects. This negotiation process, depending on the cultural substrate of the subject, will clearly have different nuances depending on the setting in which these resources are presented, exhibited and connected in autonomy projects (Di Giovanni, Zarcone, 2022). The work of punctuation on internal and external resources should involve the mapping of some specific clusters that in international literature and practice have been identified as promoting and protective factors of resilience (Ungar, 2020), namely: the presence of deep relationships; the development of a strong identity; the development of personal control and self-efficacy; the perception of social justice; access to material resources; the sense of cohesion towards a group; and the sense of cultural adherence. For each of these resources, all those nodes in the network that allow the autonomy of the care leaver to be fostered not only materially and economically, but also socially and culturally, in terms of active citizenship, should be punctuated and activated already in the planning stage. The work of the autonomy tutor is thus configured as the structuring of the resilient process through actions addressed both to the individual, through clinical practice, and to groups (Ungar, 2020). Schematically, below is a selection of the tools that the tutor can use in working with the individual:

- the Todd card, also called the map of emotional proximity, that is, the tool that can be used for the exploration of primary networks and is fundamental in monitoring interpersonal management (Guay, 2000);
- the Rousseau card, ie those schemes that show the social and personal relationships of an individual in his environment and also allow to visualize the quality of these relationships by identifying them as positive and educational or negative and stressful (Rousseau, Bélanger, 1985);
- the narration of oneself since the story of one's life and a creative reinterpretation of the different experiences lived, can stimulate in the narrator an inner maturation, a process of change, a new planning, and a new ability to organize one's life as an adult using personal resources (Demetrio, 1991; Cyrulnik, 2021);

- the balance of skills that can be used in order to help the child to reflect on the dimensions of "know-how" and "knowing how to be" in order to try to identify interests and a possible career path. It is a tool that can facilitate the orientation and recognition of one's resources, better defining one's abilities, recognizing and enhancing them in order to use them to the fullest;
- stimulation of the playful dimension, the work / school dimension and the emotional-relational dimension;
- the P.A.T.H., a creative planning tool that starts from the future and works backwards to identify the first possible and positive steps. It requires careful listening to the child or young person, understanding their desires and fears and building a path that outlines their development. In this way, he will be able to focus on simple daily actions oriented in constructive directions (SOS Children's Villages International, CELCIS, 2017);
- the *suitcase, night table, waste basket*: the suitcase represents the aspects that you want to bring with you from the experience, the elements to be enhanced, the strengths you can count on for the future as well. The night table depicts the aspects of the activity carried out to be put aside to resume them at a later time as they require further reflection, further elaboration, on which there is still work to be done. Those aspects of the experience that you want to "throw" end up in the waste basket because they are read as critical issues, what you don't like, that you don't want to do again. The boy/girl is asked to reflect on the experience and to write three or four elements that go into each of the three "containers" and then to discuss with the tutor.

  For the work with groups it can be used (Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze, 2020):
- labyrinths, being immersed in an intricate labyrinth wants to recreate the situation of being immersed in a complicated situation for which no solution is seen. Faced with the difficulty of finding the way, we can be disheartened, repeating the same mistakes can cause moments of discouragement but seeing what happens to us from a different point of view helps us find the right path and understand where we made the mistake. This technique aims to promote the awareness that it is difficult for everyone to understand what happens to us and what we experience when we are totally immersed in a situation. Fundamental condition for the boys / girls who tend not to recognize themselves capable of growth, emancipation or deserving of success but also for the tutor who carries out a job within a relationship in a situation of space and time not always shared with the other operators;
- the puzzle whose individual tiles represent the various members of the group. Thus, as only the interlocking of the various pieces gives rise to the final image, in real life the interactions between individuals can help in achieving the objectives;
- the escape room, a method whereby the group is locked in a room, to open the exit door it is necessary to find hidden clues, solve puzzles, understand the story in which you are immersed and reason accordingly, in a set time. To do this it is necessary that the internal potential of the group converge towards the same goal. During the game, the components will have to get to know each other, collaborate and confront each other in order to solve all the proposed puzzles, in order to reach the goal. To this end, each member of the group will have to draw on and / or bring out transversal skills (problem solving skills, spirit of initiative, ability to manage information, listening skills, ability to manage conflicts, time management skills), as well as the care leaver will have to do in real life to achieve autonomy. The game will also give the opportunity to experiment as a single individual in relation to the group, through non-formal practices and learning by doing. The Escape room, like other cooperative games, teaches you to deal with your own skills and those of others
- the story in pieces, a play on words and imagination to create completely invented stories, giving ample space to the creativity of the participants, the members of the group will choose the direction in which the story will turn without censorship by the host of the game. The purpose is to stimulate problem-solving strategies, listening, collaboration, time planning and cooperation;
- the mapping of the resources of the territory with the facilitation of the tutor consists in preparing a map that contains a survey of the services, offices and opportunities that the territory offers and which can be relevant in order to obtain information, documents and services and to have knowledge opportunities of various kinds activated or activated on the territory;
- cinematographic techniques: cinema, animation and images are media that belong to a world known to young people and therefore easy to approach. Some techniques that use the moving image and the story can facilitate the tutor in working with the children because they manage to involve them by leading them to new explorations, elaborations, new forms of communication and evaluation and often also to the creation of new concepts starting from the basic ones.

5.   Conclusions

The figure of the tutor for the autonomy of the care leaver constitutes an important novelty in the Italian panorama of services. He/she, like a ferryman, accompanies each individual or group of care leavers not only towards autonomy but also towards a more marked closeness to that *eudaimonia* of each, that is, that state of full human flowering that configures a state of happiness. It should be remembered here that it is still an experimental action, therefore not structural. It therefore certainly constitutes a first important step which nevertheless needs to be transformed into a permanent device. Furthermore, the number of care leavers recipients of this measure as well as the type of care leaving paths are still reduced; just think of how young people outside their family are currently excluded as a result of a criminal provision, or young people with a migratory background (so-called UASC). For them, alternative paths will certainly be necessary, capable of grasping the fragility and specificities of their paths, allowing everyone to project themselves towards their own life goals. Moreover, the reflection on care leaving in the Italian context needs to broaden the look on the topic of autonomy from the point of view of capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011) and rights (see Hollingsworth, 2013), although this topic related to children and care leavers attracts little attention compared to the topics of care and protection (Driscoll, 2017).

References

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American psychologist*, *55*(5), 469.

Arnett, J. J. (2007). Afterword: Aging out of care – Toward realizing the possibilities of emerging adulthood Special Issue. *New Directions of Youth Development*, 113, 151–161.

Atwool, N. (2016). Journeys of exclusion: Unpacking the experience of adolescent care leavers in New Zealand. In *Young people transitioning from out-of-home care* (pp. 309-328). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Baidawi, S., Mendes, P., & Snow, P. C. (2014). Young people in, and transitioning from, out-of-home care and their mental health issues: A call for evidence. *Children Australia*, *39*(4), 200-205.

Barbarotto, M., & Zanuso, R. (2010), *Linee guida di inclusione sociale dei giovani care leavers*, Milano: Ancona Editrice.

Bastianoni, P., & Baiamonte, M. (2014). Il progetto educativo nelle comunità per i minori: Cos' è e come si costruisce. Trento: Edizioni Erickson.

Bastianoni, P., &Taurino, A. (2007). La genitorialità come funzione e narrazione: un approccio psicodinamico. P. Bastianoni, A. Taurino (Eds.), *Famiglie e genitorialità oggi. Nuovi significati e prospettive*, Milano: Unicopli, 17-40.

Bastianoni, P., Ciriello, M., & Fucili, A. M. (2016). Comuni_care in comunità per i minori. Parma: Gruppo Spaggiari.

Bastianoni, P., & Taurino, A. (2009), *Le comunità per minori. Modelli di formazione e supervisione clinica*, Roma: Carocci.

Bastianoni, P., & Zullo, F. (Eds.) (2012), *Neomaggiorenni e autonomia personale. Resilienza ed emancipazione*, Roma: Carocci.

Bertolini, P., & Caronia, L. (1999), *Ragazzi difficili: pedagogia interpretativa e linee di intervento*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia.

Brofenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human development. *Handbook of child psychology*, *1*, 793-828.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979), *Ecologia dello sviluppo umano*, tr. It. Hvastja Stefani, L. (1986), Bologna: Il Mulino.

Butterworth, S., Singh, S. P., Birchwood, M., Islam, Z., Munro, E. R., Vostanis, P., ... & Simkiss, D. (2017). Transitioning care- leavers with mental health needs:'they set you up to fail!'. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, *22*(3), 138-147.

Calheiros, M., Garrido, M., & Rodrigues, L. (2009). Percorsi di autonomia: una ricerca-intervento portoghese. *S. Premoli (Ed.), Verso l'autonomia. Percorsi di sostegno all'integrazione sociale di giovani, FrancoAngeli, Milano*, 207-217.

Cameron, C., Hollingworth, K., Schoon, I., van Santen, E., Schöer, W., Ristikari, T., ... & Pekkarinen, E. (2018). Care leavers in early adulthood: How do they fare in Britain, Finland and Germany? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 87, 163–172.

Cyrulnik, B. (2021), Narrative Resilience. Neurological and Psychotherapeutic Reflections, in Ungar M. (ed), *Multisystemic Resilience. Adaptation and Transformation in Contexts of Change*, Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Cyrulnik, B., & Malaguti, E. (Eds.). (2005). *Costruire la resilienza. La riorganizzazione positiva della vita e la creazione di legami significativi*. Trento: Erickson.Demetrio, D. (1990), *L'età adulta. Teorie dell'identità e pedagogie dello sviluppo*, Roma: Carocci.

Demetrio, D. (1991). *Il gioco della vita*. Milano: Guerini e Associati.

Demetrio, D. (2005), *In età adulta. Le mutevoli fisionomie*, Milano: Guerini e Associati.

Di Giovanni, E., & Zarcone, R. (2022). Processi resilienti e controversie culturali nel care leaving. In *Narrare i Gruppi*, latest – 15 luglio 2022, pp. 01-16 - [Online] Available: www.narrareigruppi.it

Dixon, J. (2008). Young people leaving care: health, well- being and outcomes. *Child & family social work*, *13*(2), 207-217.

Driscoll, J. (2013). Supporting care leavers to fulfil their educational aspirations: Resilience, relationships and resistance to help. *Children & Society*, *27*(2), 139-149.

Driscoll, J. (2017). *Transitions from care to independence: Supporting young people leaving state care to fulfil their potential*. London: Routledge.

Fabbri, L., & Melacarne G. (2012). I giovani e il lavoro. Education, Sciences and Society, 1: 10-22.

Folgheraiter, F. (2006), La cura delle reti, Trento: Erikson

Gilligan, R. (2015). Comments as respondent at launch of research report *The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking care and educational data.* London: Nuffield Foundation

Gilligan, R. (2019). Resilience, transitions, and youth leaving care. *Leaving care and the transition to adulthood: International contributions to theory, research and practice*, 51-68.

Glynn, N., & Mayock, P. (2019). "I've changed so much within a year": care leavers' perspectives on the aftercare planning process. *Child Care in Practice*, *25*(1), 79-98.

Groinig, M., & Sting, S. (2019). Educational pathways in and out of child and youth care. The importance of orientation frameworks that guide care leavers' actions along their educational pathway. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *101*, 42-49.

Guay, J. (2000). *Il Case Management comunitario*. Napoli: Liguori.

Hollingsworth, K. (2013). Theorising children's rights in youth justice: The significance of autonomy and foundational rights. *The Modern Law Review*, 76(6), pp. 1046–1069.

Iori V. (2012). I giovani e la vita emotiva. Education, Sciences and Society, 1: 23-35.

Istat (2014). Generazioni a confronto. Come cambiano i percorsi verso la vita adulta. Roma: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica

Istat (2019). Rapporto annuale. La situazione del Paese. Roma: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica.

Laffi, S. (Ed.). (2016). *Quello che dovete sapere di me. La parola ai ragazzi.* Milano: Feltrinelli.

Lemus, D., Farruggia, S. P., Germo, G., & Chang, E. S. (2017). The plans, goals, and concerns of pre-emancipated youth in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *78*, 48-55.

Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, & Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze (2019). *Interventi in via sperimentale in favore di coloro che, al compimento della maggiore età, vivano fuori dalla famiglia di origine sulla base di un provvedimento dell'autorità giudiziaria*. [Online] Available: https://www.minori.gov.it/it/minori/interventisperimentale-favore-dei-care-leavers

Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Istituto degli Innocenti (2020), Guida della sperimentazione nazionale Care Leavers.

Nagy, A. (2018). Insights into structurally identical experiences of residential care alumni: The paradox of becoming autonomous in a residential care facility. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, *9*(2), 61-85.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating Capabilities. The Human Development Approach*. London: Harvard University Press

Obradović, J., Burt, K. B., & Masten, A. S. (2006). Pathways of adaptation from adolescence to young adulthood: Antecedents and correlates. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *1094*(1), 340-344.

Pandolfi, L. (2015). *Costruire resilienza. Analisi e indicazioni per l'accompagnamento educativo in uscita dalle comunità per minori*, Milano: Guerini Scientifica.

Pandolfi, L. (2019). Vivere l'età adulta dopo l'esperienza della comunità per minori. L'associazionismo tra care leavers come educazione permanente. Pedagogia oggi, 17(2), 126-139.

Pandolfi, L., Ciampa, A., Bianchi, D., Fagnini, L., & Degl'Innocenti, S. (2020). Design and evaluation of experimental leaving care interventions. *Form@ re-Open Journal per la formazione in rete*, *20*(2), 35-51.

Pietropolli Charmet, G. (2010). *Fragile e spavaldo. Ritratto dell'adolescente di oggi*. Bari: Laterza.

Premoli, S., (Ed.) (2009), *Verso l'autonomia: percorsi di sostegno all'integrazione sociale di giovani*, Milano: Franco Angeli.

Refaeli, T. (2017). Narratives of care leavers: What promotes resilience in transitions to independent lives? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 79, 1–9.

Refaeli, T., Mangold, K., Zeira, A., & Köngeter, S. (2017). Continuity and discontinuity in the transition from care to adulthood. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *47*(2), 325-342.

Rousseau, R., & Bélanger, M. (1985). *Les outils d'intervention de réseaux*, Groupe de Recherche sur les Pratiques de Réseaux. Canada : Ministère de la Santé Nationale et du Bien-Etre social du Canada.

Saraceno, C. (2017). L'equivoco della famiglia. Bari: Laterza.

Sen, A. (2017). *Collective choice and social welfare. An expanded edition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

SOS Children's Villages International & CELCIS, Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (2017), Manuale formativo "Preparazione all'Autonomia", Strathclyde: University of Strathclyde.

Stein, M., & Munro, E.R. (2008), *Young People's Transitions from Care to Adulthood. International Research and Practice*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publisher.

Stein, M. (2012), *Young people leaving care. Supporting pathways to adulthood*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Sulimani-Aidan, Y. (2018). Promoting resilience among adolescents in care from their social workers' perspectives. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 94, 43-48.

Tudge, J. R., Mokrova, I., Hatfield, B. E., & Karnik, R. B. (2009). Uses and misuses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. *Journal of family theory & review*, *1*(4), 198-210.

Ungar, M. (2020). Working with children and youth with complex needs: 20 skills to build resilience. (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Vanistendael, S., & Lecomte, J. (2000). *Le bonheur est toujours possible. Construire la résilience*. Paris: Bayard.

Vitale, L (2012), *Diventare adulti in comunità minori*, in Bonato R., Castiglioni G. (a cura di), *Famiglia, lavoro e istituzioni. Uno sguardo sul futuro*, Milano: Ledizioni.

Ward, H. (2011). Continuities and discontinuities: Issues concerning the establishment of a persistent sense of self amongst care leavers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(12), 2512-2518.

Wolf, K. (2002). *Erziehung zur Selbstständigkeit in Familie und Heim* [Education for self-employment in family and home]. Münster, Germany: Votum.

Zullo, F. (2016). Accompagnamento verso l'autonomia: i servizi residenziali per giovani in uscita dalla tutela. *Rassegna bibliografica infanzia e adolescenza*, (4), pp. 1-16.

Zullo, F., Bastianoni, P., & Taurino, A. (2008). La de istituzionalizzazione dei bambini e degli adolescenti in una prospettiva psicodinamica e psicosociale. *Rassegna Bibliografica: Infanzia e Adolescenza*, *3*, 5-31.