



Opinions of separated youngsters on the quality of their lives in the Netherlands and ...

How to assess which type of shelter protects the child's life and development best

Margrite Kalverboer

Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences - Department of Special Needs Education and Youth Care



Content

- › The AMA-monitor: results of a study about the opinion of separated children on the quality of their lives in the Netherlands and their wellbeing
- › Assessment of the child's best interests based on General Comment no 14 concerning the choice of shelter
- › A case study to practice!



Types of shelter and care in the Netherlands

- › ‘Foster families’ from their own cultures
- › Children’s residential groups
- › Small residential units
- › Asylum centers



Studie 2010-2014 Central questions

What do unaccompanied minors, living in different types of shelter, think about the quality of their lives and their wellbeing?

What improvements are to be made concerning the policy of Nidos?

Extra

What do professionals think about the quality of the child rearing in the different types of shelter in relation to the wellbeing of the unaccompanied minors?



Method

Between 2010-2014

In-depth interviews with minors N=106

Questionnaires

- › YSR 2010-2011 N=30
- › SDQ 2012-2014 N=61
- › BIC-Q 2010-2014 N=106

- › In this workshop I present the analyses of 106 in-dept-interviews and the 91 cases in which the results of both the YSR or SDQ and BIC-Q are available



Topics in the in-dept-interviews

- › **Living conditions and care;** Schooling and education; Employment; Health care; **Food;** Asylum seeking procedures and treatment by officials; Legal guardianship; Detention; **Psychosocial support and resources; Integration;** Family tracing and family reunification; Any verbal, psychological or physical abuse suffered since arriving in a EU Member State; Changes; Good practices; Plans for the future



The BIC-model

Family: current situation

1. Adequate physical care
2. Safe direct physical environment
3. Affective atmosphere
4. Supporting, flexible childrearing structure
5. Adequate examples by parents
6. Interest

Family: future and past

7. **Continuity** in upbringing conditions, future perspective

Society: current situation

8. Safe wider physical environment
9. Respect
10. Social network
11. Education
12. Contact with peers
13. Adequate examples in society

Society: future and past

14. **Stability** in life circumstances, future perspective



Vragenlijst Belang van het kind en voorwaarden voor ontwikkeling
 BIC-Q (Kalverboer & Zijlstra, 2006)

Naam kind

Geboortedatum

Gezinssamenstelling

Onderwijs

Informanten

Overige bronnen

Datum onderzoek

| Beoordeling | Verwachte verblijfssituatie situatie X (Nederland) | Verwachte verblijfssituatie Y (land van herkomst) |
|---|---|---|
| Kan een positieve ontwikkeling van het kind gewaarborgd worden? | <input type="radio"/> Goed <input type="radio"/> Voldoende <input type="radio"/> Matig <input type="radio"/> Onvoldoende | <input type="radio"/> Goed <input type="radio"/> Voldoende <input type="radio"/> Matig <input type="radio"/> Onvoldoende |
| Mogelijke schendingen van IVRK artikelen: | <input type="radio"/> Art. 3 <input type="radio"/> Art. 6 <input type="radio"/> Art. 12 <input type="radio"/> Art..... | <input type="radio"/> Art. 3 <input type="radio"/> Art. 6 <input type="radio"/> Art. 12 <input type="radio"/> Art..... |



Analyses

- › Interviews:
- › positive and negative opinion on the topics
- › The results of the studies in the different years were compared
- › BIC-scores are dichotomized; max score=14 lowest score=0
- › Outcomes of the BIC-Q and SDQ or YSR were compared to find out if there is a correlation between them



Results

A selection of the topics in the in-dept-
interviews



Topic *Living conditions and care*

| | Foster care | Living group | Small living unit | Campus | Total |
|----------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Positive | 34 (97%) | 17 (65.4%) | 16 (64%) | 6 (30%) | 64 (60.4%) |
| Negative | 1 (3%) | 9 (34.6%) | 9 (36%) | 14 (70%) | 42 (39.6%) |
| Total | 35 (100%) | 26 (100%) | 25 (100%) | 20 (100%) | 106 (100%) |



Minors about *Living conditions and care*

Everything that happened in the past is difficult for the future'
(Children's residential group, 2014)

*We want to have more contact with our mentor, more safety,
structure and support* (Small living unit, 2011)

*'I get food, I have a roof but that's it. It is a house but it isn't my
house. There is no one really taking care of me. My foster
parents are kind but they are not like me'* (Foster care, 2014)

*There is too much noise here because of drugs and alcohol
abuse* (Campus, 2012).



Topic *Food*

| | Foster care | Living group | Small living unit | Campus | Total |
|----------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|----------|------------|
| Positive | 34 (97.1%) | 24 (92.3%) | 23 (92%) | 9 (45%) | 92 (86.8%) |
| Negative | 1 (2.9%) | 2 (7.7%) | 2 (8%) | 11 (55%) | 14 (13.2%) |
| Total | 35 (100%) | 26(100%) | 25(100%) | 20(100%) | 106 (100%) |



Minors about **Food**

The staff cooks our diner, we are not allowed to cook. I would like to cook because than we could prepare Afghanis food

(Children's residential group, 2013)

I don't get enough money to buy decent food (Campus 2010)

It is too dirty here so I don't cook (Campus, 2012)



Sources of support

- › The foster parents, mentor, peers, family in the home country.
- › Family in the Netherlands
- › Activities like sport
- › Religion and the church

- › Some children mention to get no support at all



*Minors about **Psycho social support and resources***

- › *With a particular friend, I have a good contact. If he has problems he tells me about them. We can talk (Campus, 2012)*
- › *If I have problems, I talk with friends, there is no one else I can count on (Children's living group, 2012)*
- › *Sport is my most important source of support (Small living unit, 2011)*



Topic *Integration*

| | Foster care | Living group | Small living unit | Campus | Total |
|----------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|----------|------------|
| Positive | 31(97.1) | 10(38.5) | 13(52%) | 9 (45%) | 63(59.4) |
| Negative | 4 (2.9) | 16(61.5%) | 12(48%) | 11(55%) | 43(40.6%) |
| Total | 35 (100%) | 26(100%) | 25(100%) | 20(100%) | 106 (100%) |



Minors about *Integration*

- › *I think the Netherlands is good, I feel accepted* (Children's living group, 2012)
- › *I don't know if I am accepted, I almost don't know any one and no one knows me* (Children's living group, 2012)
- › *I would like to go to another school and live in another house so I could be more part of the Dutch society* (Campus 2014)



Conclusions based on the interviews

- › Children in foster care flourish best.
- › Children in asylum seeking centers are most negative about the quality of their existence and complain most about their social and emotional well being.
 - Lack of special attention and affectional bonds



Needs of separated children

- › Trust, special care, affective and emotional bonds
- › Education that suits them
- › Being part of the community



The quality of the child rearing Scores on the BIC-Q



BIC-Q-mean scores for the different types of shelter

| | | |
|------------------------------|------|--------|
| Foster families | 12.3 | (N=29) |
| Children's residential group | 8.7 | (N=22) |
| Small living unit | 7.2 | (N=22) |
| Asylum center | 3.1 | (N=19) |

The best quality of child rearing in foster families, the worst in asylum centers



The quality of the child rearing Related to the social and emotional wellbeing of youngsters



Relation between the quality of child rearing and the social and emotional wellbeing

- › There is a negative correlation between BIC-Q scores and scores on the YSR and SDQ.
- › Children living in families have fewer social emotional problems than children living in other types of shelter.



Discussion on the results of the monitor

- › We don't know if the minors with the most severe problems are placed in centers because they don't fit in elsewhere or
- › if they develop problems because of the insufficient quality of the child rearing in the centers
- › Subject for further study



Part two

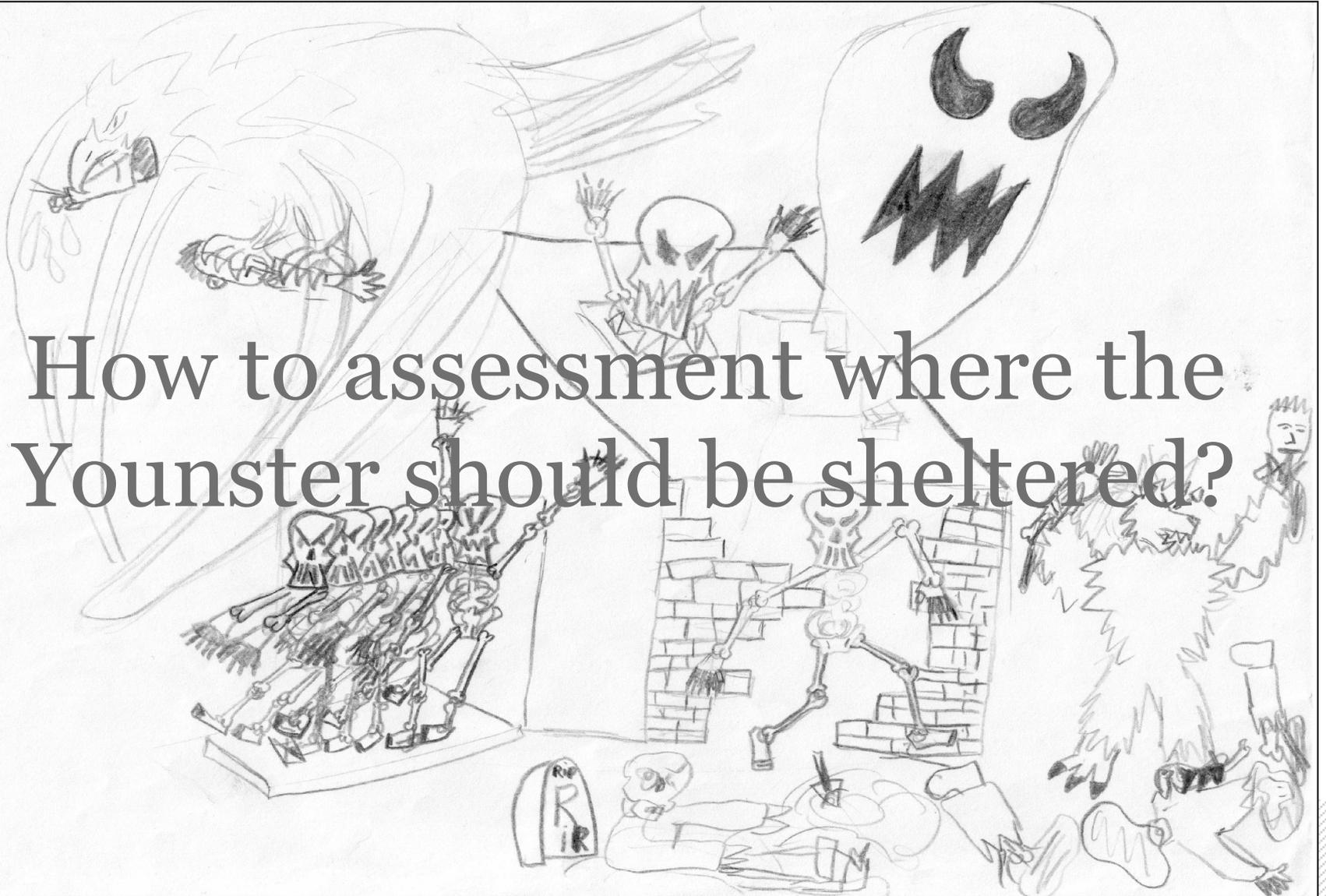
How to assess the quality of child rearing



university of
groningen



How to assessment where the
Younster should be sheltered?





Best Interest of the Child assessment GC no 14

- › In each individual case
- › In the light of the specific circumstances of each child

Related to

1. Individual characteristics of the child
 2. Social and cultural context the child finds himself
- › Consequences now and in the future ensuring continuity and stability
 - › Assessment by independent professionals
 - › Preferably by a multidisciplinary team
 - › Child must be heard and views must be taken into account



UN-Committee and assessing the child's best interests (GC no 14)

- › Following elements are always to be considered:
 - *The child's views; the child's identity; preservation of family environment and relationships; care, protection and safety; right to be heard, education*
 - The relevant elements must be defined
 - A relative weight must be assigned
- › A procedure must be followed which ensures legal guarantees and proper application of the law



Some pre-flight risk factors for mental health problems adding to vulnerability

- Accumulation of negative personal experiences with violence
- Separation from parents
- Injured oneself
- Violent death of a family member
- Parents being victim of violence

(Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazal, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2012).



Some riskfactors for mental health problems during the flight adding to vulnerability

- › Being a girl
- › Separated
- › Violence
- › How the flight went (length, hardship, dangerously)

(Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazal, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2012).



Some riskfactors for mental health problems In the host country adding to vulnerability

- Separated
- Discrimination
- Exposed to violence
- Uncertain about the procedure
- Several replacements
- Rearing environments of poor quality

Previous risks in the home country and during the flight
A cumulative experiences of loss and feelings of insecurity

(Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2012).



Protective factors in the host country

- Support by friends
- Self reported positive school-experiences
- Foster care in a family with the same cultural background

A quick, careful procedure, restriction of house movements, sociale support and social bondings

(Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Fazal, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2012).



The assessment in practice

- › Assessing the characteristics of the child
- › Assessing the quality of the *current* and *expected* social and cultural environment
- › Involving the child's view
- › The most weight is to be assigned to the elements that are most important to guarantee the child's prospects on a healthy (holistic) development and experiencing of a good childhood considering the full and effective enjoyment of the CRC rights on the short and the long term
- › Using reliable and valid diagnostic methods, a child friendly setting, an educated multidisciplinary team
- › Resulting in an advise or decision

Relevant elements in the best-interests assessment and content of the elements in a decision on where the child should grow up

Relevant individual characteristics of the child

The social and cultural context in which the child finds himself/herself

Identity

- Gender
- Age
- Religion and beliefs
- Sexual orientation
- Cultural background

Vulnerability

- The child's history in the home country of exposure to violence, separations or death of family members;
- The child's experiences during the flight;
- Being unaccompanied;
- The child's negative experiences and exposure to violence in the host country;
- The child's current social and emotional development
- Specific handicaps of the child.

Quality of the child rearing: the current and expected developmental prospects of the child: are the BIC-model's 14 environmental conditions for development now and in the future of sufficient quality?

Elements in the assessment with specific relevance

- All conditions of the BIC-model are relevant!!!
- Care, protection and safety of the child (conditions 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 of the BIC-model)
- Maintaining relations (conditions 7, 10, 12, 14 of the BIC-model)

Specific question:

- Will the development and the prospects of the child's be disrupted by changing of shelter?



The child's view

Quality of his/her (holistic) development, his/her rearing situation and his/her prospects.



Balancing the elements in the procedure: how are the elements to be weighed?

The elements have to be weighed against each other. The elements that are most important to guarantee the child's prospects on safety, a healthy (holistic) development and the experiencing of a childhood in a safe social and cultural rearing environment with developmental prospects considering the full and effective enjoyment of the CRC rights on the short and the long term are to be assigned the most weight.



Advise for the BIC-determination based on the assessment

The solution that protects the child's rights on life and on a holistic development on the short and the long term best, is the one to be advised in the best interests of the child. The child's view has to be taken into account. In case the child is too young to be involved in the decision-making process, the opinion of the child's protectors is to be considered.



The Case

Boy, 17 years old, in a foster family. He is not happy about his life.

What is the quality of the child rearing?

Where which type of shelter is best to protect his development?



References

- › Bronstein, I. & Montgomery, P. (2011). Psychological distress in refugee children: a systematic review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 14, 44-56.
- › Caprara, G.V., & Rutter, M. (1995). Individual development and social change. In M. Rutter, & D.J. Smith (eds.), *Psychological disorders in young people: Time, trends and their causes* (pp. 35-66). Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.
- › Fazel, M., Reed, R.V., Panter-Brick, C., & Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: Risk and protective factors. *Lancet*, 379 (9812), 266-282.
- › Kalverboer, M. E., Ten Brummelaar, M. D. C., Post, W. J., Zijlstra, A. E., Harder, A. T., & Knorth, E. J. (2012). The Best Interest of the Child Questionnaire; reliability and validity. Preliminary data on the question: Where to live after detention or secure treatment? *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 22(1), 41-52. doi: 10.1002/cbm.825. [SSCI].
- › Ten Brummelaar, M. D. C., Kalverboer, M. E., Harder, A. T., Post, W. J., Zijlstra, A. E., & Knorth, E. J. (2013). The Best Interest of the Child Self-report questionnaire (BIC-S): Results of a participatory development procedure. *Child Indicators Research*, doi: 10.1007/s12187-013-9225-3.
- › Zijlstra, A. E., Kalverboer, M. E., Post, W. J., Ten Brummelaar, M. D. C., & Knorth, E. J. (2013). Could the BIC-Q be a decision-support tool to predict the development of asylum-seeking children? *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 35, doi 10.1016/j.ijlp.2013.01.005 .
- › Zijlstra, A. E., Kalverboer, M. E., Post, W. J., Knorth, E. J., & Ten Brummelaar, M. D. C. (2012). The Quality of the Childrearing Environment of Refugee or Asylum Seeking Children and the Best Interests of the Child: Reliability and Validity of the BIC-Q. *Behavioral Sciences and The Law*, 28, doi: 10.1002/bsl.1998
- › Zijlstra, A. E. (2012). *In the best interest of the child? A study into a decision-support tool validating asylum-seeking children's rights from a behavioural scientific perspective*. Dissertation. University of Groningen.



Thank you for your attention!

