Integrity, autonomy and participation in child protection: How do children and parents experience the proceedings of Child and Adult Protection Authorities?

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Through historical and legal analysis as well as an empirical study in the French and German speaking regions of Switzerland, this project studies how children and parents understand, experience and respond to what happens to them during child protection proceedings.

Project description

In line with the goals of the NRP 76, this project aims to produce knowledge about key features of fair child protection proceedings. Historical analysis provides a record of existing historiographic knowledge about children’s and parents’ experiences of the actions and decisions of child protection authorities (pre-1981 and 1981-2012). Legal analysis studies the long-term development of parents’ and children’s rights in child protection proceedings (1907 - to date) and innovative developments in other countries. The empirical study in French- and German-speaking regions of Switzerland asks how parents and children currently perceive the actions and interventions of Swiss Child and Adult Protection Authorities (CAPAs). A final interdisciplinary phase will develop a draft legislation for a new child protection procedure and accompanying guidelines.

Context

Both historical and current international research indicate that child protection proceedings, being complex and controversial, create manifold opportunities for actions and interactions that children and parents may experience as violating their integrity and threatening their autonomy. To avoid this risk, it is necessary to know more about parents’ and children’s experiences with child protection authorities.

Aims

The project aims to study how children and parents understand, experience and respond to what happens to them during child protection proceedings, and in encounters with Swiss CAPAs, and what the characteristics of proceedings are that will encourage them, in particular the children, to make use of their right to be heard, and participate in ways that are both meaningful to them and have their best interest at heart.

Importance

The results will be of significance not only for scientific debate, but will also raise the awareness of child protection professionals regarding the conditions and settings that encourage and support genuine participation by children and parents. The project will furthermore provide information on innovative, deliberative models designed to facilitate participation in child protection proceedings, and thus help realise the full potential of the interdisciplinary composition of Child and Adult Protection Authorities in Switzerland.