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Mirage: Possibilities and Limitations of Experiencing Foster Home as a Family

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Abstract

The theme of this chapter is the life of children living in state foster homes of the so-called family type. The theoretical scope of the research on the quality of life is based on the chosen capabilities according to the theory by Martha Nussbaum. The qualitative strategy has been chosen as a base for the methodology of the research. Predominantly, the deductive method has been used for collecting and processing the research data by openly coding the transcripts of clinic interviews with children living in foster homes. The research has been searching for answers to these four questions: How can children, living in foster homes, develop cognitively? How can children build relationships and emotions in foster homes? What does the term “home” mean for children living in foster homes? How do children living in foster homes perceive their own identity? Among the most important research findings belongs the information on an excessive burden of adoption on the children, on a weak engagement in creation and improvement of children's home, on wrong conditions for the self-development, self-evaluation and self-reflection of a child and other.

Keywords: capability, child, foster home, quality of life

1. Introduction

There are children living everywhere in the world, for which their parents cannot or will not care. Every society creates its own mechanisms to cope with this phenomenon. That applies to Slovakia with its over 5 million population as well, marked by the culture of central Europe, Christian values, but also by a half-century of the socialism regime. The socialistic period of the life of society has been defined by the state monopoly and by a high centralization of provided social help to citizens, which practically meant a high rate of the provided social care in the state residential form. That brought along the uniformity, poor range of forms provided, and a high rate of passivity in clients. After the 1989 revolution the passive approach of social care has changed into active approach of social help, which also applies on the area of help for children. Post-revolutionary legislation has broken down the state monopoly on providing the social services and socio-legal protection of children and offered participation to private subjects. The enforcement of social help has been decentralized into public and private providers. *The Agreement on rights of a child* and consecutively established *Directives of the United Nations on the foster-family care* have been an important influence on socio-political and economic change in the approach towards child care. The government

of Slovak republic has elaborated the *Strategy of deinstitutionalization of the system of social services and foster-family care* and ever since 2011 creates legislative, social and economical conditions to support a life of children in their natural, foster and community environment. The state policy after the revolution prefers child care in a family in the form of foster personal care, step-family care and personal care of a legal guardian. According to the records of the divisions of socio-legal child protection there are approximately 2,24,000 families in Slovakia [1]. In 2016, 1,058,300 children have been living in Slovakia, out of that 14,065 children (1.33%) have been living without their own home. Based on the court order, 744 children have not managed to find their home by above stated forms, 1468 children have been placed into professional families, 835 children (17.60%) have been placed into other groups and 2441 children (51.45%) have been placed into individual groups in a foster home [2]. Namely the group of these 2441 children living in a foster home has been a subject of interest to the qualitative research of which the results are being presented in this thesis. The task of a foster home is to temporally provide an alternative natural family environment to a child or to create a replacement of the family environment. Through its executive branches, the state provides and ensures for children: housing, food, services, personal equipment of a child, safe keeping of precious things, health care, mandatory school attendance and preparation for career [3] and in this way the state tries for an integration and individual approach towards the child. The integration approach is used in a sense of closing the conditions for integrating child into local communities (professional families and groups properly arranged and localized under conditions on a level of community), as well as creating conditions for integrating children with less serious development disorders into professional families and individual groups. An individual approach is based on an application of professional methods, forms and programs for working with children that require a special approach [1]. The aim of this chapter is to describe research findings on life children living in a foster home of the so-called family tape considering the capability phenomenon.

2. The capability of children approach

The capability concept stems from the approach of “child’s well-becoming.” This approach, preferred more or less up to the 80s of the last century, perceives child as a little person who experiences the in-between state towards adulthood, ergo a future adult. This approach is focused on the future of the child. The central point of interest is to ensure that the child gets good education and has good health once the child reaches the adulthood and this should be predisposed by a proper parental care. However, these goals can be formed by an adult person only. All in the name of child’s well-becoming. The child alone is perceived only as a passive receiver of these benefits [4, 5].

Decreasing birth rate, unsteadiness of human relationships in family and society, centralization and fixation of partnerships through child, have concluded into a need of a new legal position of a child, brought by the Agreement on rights of a child [6]. The situation of society in the postmodern period has brought an orientation of the society on the individualization of a person, built on the reflection [7]. This way, the “well-becoming” has changed the approach to “well-being.” This approach considers children as active participants and carriers of rights. New priorities are asserted, for example, a much higher engagement of children in achieving social skills, their engagement as citizens, and their part in creating the culture of the society. The theoretical developments of the child’s well-being approach have been built at first in the concept of life quality. The reason for this has

mostly been the attempt at quantification and measurement of the extent of child's well-being, as the phenomenon of human happiness has been difficult to measure and it was too vague. Sociably acceptable indicators as well as methods for their reading and measuring have already existed in that period in the area of life quality. It was assumed that it would be mainly social indicators that could influence the children's life conditions [8–10].

In the 60s of the last century UNICEF has published a report on the state of children, in which it also published the results of measuring the life quality of children, as well as socio-demographic trends, risks and needs of children [5, 11–15]. In the 90s of the last century the Nobel Prize winner for economics, Amartya Sen, has started to promote the so-called *capability approach* [16–18], further developed by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum [19–22]. Both had decided that the *capability* is an ability of an individual to achieve such a life the individual can value. Therefore, the *capability approach* is mostly about social arrangement of a just approach to such living conditions that the individual values himself. Both have understood that not every person has the same options of freedom and choice to reach a dignified life. They tried to find out what are the necessary expectations, options and skills people need to reach their goal. According to Nussbaum [22], in every society individuals exist who cannot even form their rights not to say fulfill them, therefore, they need support. In this classical understanding is the capability a connection: fulfilling individual's needs, human prosperity, material conditions, and fulfillment of individual needs, human desires and emotions. These characteristics have an interdisciplinary aspect of well-being. In this context, Robeyns [23] talks about the capabilities as substantive freedoms. Nussbaum [21] has formulated 10 basic capabilities; in 2014, Bigeri has presented 14 of them [5]. Martha Nussbaum described these following functions of human capabilities: (1) normal length of life—a person should not die prematurely; (2) good health—a person should have an option to enjoy good health, have appropriate care; (3) physical integrity—have the option of a free movement, a feeling of safety, protection of personal space); (4) utilization of senses, perception and thinking—access to information, education, space for self-expression, for searching for one's own meaning of life, religious freedom, freedom of expression; (5) emotions—option to create relationships with things and people, to love and to be loved, option to safely relive anger, love and other emotions; (6) practical thinking—option to create goodness, actively plan one's life, option to realize one's own plans; (7) relationships—option to live with others, participate in social interactions, empathy, to have self-worth and respect others, protection from discrimination, reciprocal appreciation; (8) other living creatures—to have the option to relive the relationship with animals, plants; (9) game—option to play, entertain and relax; (10) control over one's own environment—have the right to engage, associate and protect one's own work, as well as to own a property. At first glance, these 10 capabilities might sound a little bit generalized, stemming from the combination of some human rights and psychological, biological and social human needs. In spite of this overall universalism is out of it built a theoretical scope of quantitative research the subject of which was capability of children, living in foster homes in Slovakia in 2016–2017.

3. Research methods and realization

The content analysis has been used in the quality research, which was originally only quantitative research method [24]. However, the arrival of quality method of the research has influenced its usage in quality research as well [25, 26]. The aim of our research was to find out how can children living in foster home lead a life they

would like to lead. Through 2016, we have realized 35 in depth interviews with four categories of participants: children between the age of 6 and 14, children above 15 years old, young adults and professional employees of three foster homes. Foster homes have been chosen for the research on the basis of two criteria: its capacity should top 70 children and they should have been from various regions. Children have entered foster home either from biological families or from professional, in some cases foster families. The selection of concrete children for the interview has been done on the basis of their age, sibling relationships and mainly proclaimed willingness of a child to talk. The bottom age line was stated by the legislation that in Slovak republic does not allow children below the age of 6 to live in a residential facility. The exception consists of children with grievous health disadvantage, living in specialized socio-health facilities who can be younger than 6 years. In this chapter we present the results of the group of children between the age of 6 and 14, living in individual nurture groups of family type. The nurture group of family type itself has its own budget that is usually around 6–10 children. The group consists of siblings, filled in by other children. The group is therefore heterogeneous in age and gender. Children should participate in domestic chores, they should learn individually how to manage finances: foster home is divided spatially into several units—stand-alone nurture groups and some of them can be in a family home outside of the main domicile of the foster home. Children share rooms in two or three, have a shared living room and kitchen. Six employees alternate fixedly, usually consisting of a team of educators, social and therapeutic educators, housekeepers. A psychologist and social worker is employed in the foster home as well. From 29 hour footage we have transcribed a 406 page long transcript. This transcript formed the research sample. For one unit of analysis were considered quotes of children, regarding the way of life in the foster home. We have acquired on one side manifest contents, obvious from interviews and latent contents on the other side, that result from verbal as well as non-verbal utterances of children during the interview, located in its in-depth structures. We have created four research questions: (1) How can children living in foster home develop cognitively? (2) How can children in foster home develop their relationships and emotions? (3) What does the term home means for children in foster home? (4) How children from foster home perceive their identity? (5) When analyzing the transcripts of the recorded interviews we used symbolic interactionism, which Hendl [27] considered to be the basis assumption of the correct application of the grounded theory approach and the modification of which [28–31] we used to process our results. Our goal was to clarify the phenomenon of the capability of children living under the conditions of an institution that simulates the family environment. The capability phenomenon is presumed in the context of strictly recorded data that anchor it into theoretical frameworks. The primary focus of this research is capability of children. Through a three-level coding (open coding, axial coding and selective coding), we have abstracted variables that lead to the formation of the conceptual scheme describing relationships between the obtained variables.

4. Process of analysis

We have collected the data through in-depth interview that we have record on the audio-record and transcribed into transcripts. The transcripts were coded at first, and then we have repeatedly checked their suitability considering the observed factors of children's capability. Some were discarded; some were modified and consecutively used in the next sequence of coding. In the research we have follow the rules of ethical research. A high probability of subjectivism in interpretation of collected data was minimized by having four researchers work at the same

time. Even though each one had their “own” age group of participants, the strategy of acquiring and processing the data had been mutually agreed upon. We processed the transcripts of the recordings into a spreadsheet form [32], which allowed us to freely add text to the rows and columns into a final representation.

When naming the statements, we used the procedure of asking questions [28]. The child’s statements have already been conceptualized in the first step. The goal of interviewing the child was to identify categories of its life experience (capabilities) in the context of possibilities and limitations provided by living in foster care. Even at this stage of open coding, we had an idea about these categories, but we tried to schematize them and interpret them as objectively as possible by using codes. Another level of coding, so-called axial coding, was used to construct the main categories into a concepts [28, 30, 33] and thus to try to find their properties and characteristics. The subcategories resulting from open and axial coding have been allocated into seven outcome categories of research findings. We have assigned them to the selected Nussbaum capabilities. We compared the outcomes to the descriptions of the selected capabilities in order to create a solid structure for interpreting the research data. At the outset, Nussbaum’s capabilities have mainly been used to form a framework for creating the questions asked in the interview. At the end of the process, they were used again to form a framework that would keep us from straying from the validity of the research.

5. Outcomes

The outcomes obtained during this research were divided into four categories. These give an insight into the extent to which children in foster care can live the life they want for themselves.

For better clarity, we sorted the obtained results according to selected Nussbaum capabilities.

5.1 Capability 4

Use of senses, ideas and thoughts—access to information, education, space for self-realization, for searching one’s own, meaning of life, religious freedom, freedom of expression **Tables 1** and **2**.

Recording of the interviews with children had started on the last day of the school year. The report and the school were therefore a spontaneous theme number one in our interviews. Children talked by themselves about not liking to attend school, about almost all of them having postponed the school attendance and at least half of them visits school with special needs. This quantification is not as interesting considering the low numbers of participants. However, interesting is the way of attendance in specialized schools. A child, after being taken out of a family, has been by the court order placed into a foster home—an institution of residential type. Considering the social deficits of the family, the child comes to the foster home and most probably with the postponed school attendance or with very bad school achievements, which is usually caused either by socially uneventful environment or by undiagnosed or deeply neglected learning disability. Almost automatically, child switches into a school for special needs. Considering the integration at Slovak schools is only a wish, child is moved into a school for children with special needs. These are almost all of the dormitory type; build in socialism regime on the edge regions with hard accessibility. Therefore, the child leaves on Monday the residency of foster home and enters the residency of specialized school, which the child leaves again on Friday afternoon, to come back to foster home. For example, even a 7-year old child must manage adaption in two residential systems!

Codes	Bad school results; problems with mathematics and English; deferred schooling; school for children with special needs; disinterest in learning; school with Slovak/Hungarian language; ADHD; expelled; likes to help the school janitor; indifferent towards/dislike of teaching staff; the closest classmates are from foster care; they live in special needs school for 5 days—that is not a home, they just sleep there—and spend the 2 holiday days in children's care home; should improve school results but; would like to become a chef, carpenter, but does not do anything to achieve this; I can help myself, but ... without hobbies, interests; art—I am very good at it (reality is different); I have a talent to draw, but I do not do extracurricular activities; next year I am going to finish the drawing and attend a competition; the size of the drawing matters; I enjoy IT technologies, computers (does not have any); I exercise and climb trees (never attempted to climb one), likes owls because they have beautiful big eyes; painting; likes to play football, but is better at ice hockey (never played it); likes to go out, get a soda, go swimming, but not with kids from foster care... Jumping, badminton, third place and he also wins at tennis (never played it); I like water (sister can swim)
Categories	Bad school results are associated to disinterest in learning; almost all children have deferred school attendance and are 2 years older than other children in their year; children in schools for special needs children have better results, but significant problems with adaptation; even though the children are integrated in classes, relationships with other classmates are limited to “foster kids”; an important role in the school environment is played by “service” persons in the school—a tutor, a janitor; unclear professional career, no goals; in calmer children, interest in drawing and playing on a computer; in more excitable children, interest in climbing, cycling, football, tennis, other physical activities; hobbies are monothematic and there is a lack of diversity; a high manifestation of individuality in this environment is the interest for owls, which is not further developed because of finances
Concepts	The disadvantaged starting position in school is unmotivating for children, which reflects in poor performance and then results in lack of education and the absence of a professional career development. Children, with limited cognitive capacities, must from an early age adapt to two systems at the same time: school and home. Children appear to be sharing a sort of leisure time activities model among themselves. Activities aim to ventilate the accumulated energy. It is in this area where one can observe the largest disproportion in self-reflection. Children present results that they neither really reached, nor even tried to confront. The only real results were achieved by a boy who was led to the activity by the professional foster parent (shooting sports)

Table 1.
Children and the development of cognitive skills.

Home preparation for classes is a group thing. As a daily program, children have classes when they study, during which the employees have their chores connected with the run of “household.” Since the groups are heterogeneous by age, both first-years and high schoolers share the place and time for homework—disregarding whether the child is focused, motivated and whether the child understands the covered topic. It seems that children lack motivation the most. One can say that low school achievements and low social background practically push children into special groups of “outsiders” at school, which only strengthens the already bad social status and children circle in the identity of “fosters.” Similar findings are presented by Milan Fico from the “Institute for Research of Labour and Family” [34], who in his extensive research from 2017 talks about “rare instances of supporting a child in meeting his or her individual needs.”

Through the communication with children we have noticed very weak vocabulary of our participants. This is strongly constricted by a “lexicon” of foster surrounding and TV program. Children have problems to orient in time. A study of the “time perception” of children at foster homes would be considerable, because a child during the interview had his own “time anchors” which we as researchers did not understand much. Despite the fact that children reach the age of professional decision-making (14–15), no one works with them systematically on building their professional career. Children automatically accept the “traditions” of the foster

Codes	Trains 3× a week (only been once); cycling; shooting; I won a second place at world championships! Tomorrow I am going to camp—that is in 3 days; then we are going to be at dad's for 2 weeks and from Friday. We came to the children's care home, do not know, not sure, long time ago. At some point. I do not know how old I was, but I was 6 years old and I have been there for 8 years (is currently 10 years old); Fero murdered my brother, we washed up and were taken away in a car... I do not know how long I have been here. Was it snowy or was it summer? We did not go to school on Monday (holidays). I came here with Dominik—when?—When Tomas was in a different family. They had to leave house. When? Because grandfather was yelling at dad
Categories	The perception of the current time is relatively good, but the events of the past cannot be “anchored”—not even by significant holidays or by events
Concepts	The perception of time lacks continuity, children struggle to place events in time and do not understand the past. They lack understanding of what happened to them at home and therefore they are unable to explain their own role and involvement in any of this

Table 2.
Children and the development of cognitive skills-time.

home and attend the same high school as the foster children before them, not thinking about the major of the given high school not being in their point of interest. The foster home functions, in a way, as a sub-supplier of children for regional high schools. Similar findings are presented in the research on the life perspectives of young adults after the end of their stay in the foster care, authored by Juhásová [35]. The group approach is visible in the interests and hobbies of the child. If some child even shows interest in something outside of supported foster home activities, the child has no chance to develop his interest further. The reason for absence of an individual approach is the lack of employments, weak ability and missing tradition to organize volunteers, who would have time to spend with children individually, as well as deficit of financial means to pay the quality hobby groups.

5.2 Capability 5

Emotions are the ability to create bonds with things and people, to love and to be loved, the possibility of experiencing anger, love and other emotions and capabilities in a safe environment **Tables 3 and 4.**

5.3 Capability 6

Relationships are the opportunity to live with others, to participate in social interactions, ability to empathize, self-esteem and respect of others, protection against discrimination, mutual recognition (**Table 5**).

The second category of the research results consists of relationships and emotionality of children. Children come to the foster home usually on the basis of an incident in the family, where the trigger is usually the process of taking the child away from the family. Thus, usually all the children living in the particular family enter the foster home at the same time. These children have common family history, therefore having sibling identity as well. If nothing changes in the way of life of parents, the incident repeats itself again after several years, now with different, younger children in the family. These children enter the foster home and meet their siblings living in the foster home for years. The sibling relations of these two sub-categories are only biological. Moreover, older children have the feeling that the younger ones were “enjoying” their parents, while they were “stuck” in the foster home. Among the siblings is then strong, almost hateful relationship. If the parent switches partners too often, the connection of these siblings is only their

Codes	Visits father every day—he has 16 children—he lives with one of them; they know their parents but they hate them; parents tortured him; his life is great without the parents; father would not take me because he cannot afford to pay for my schooling and foster care will provide education for me; hates his mother; likes her mother; mother has a boyfriend; they are expecting a new child together; father is in prison; parents do short visits of their children in foster care; they always take the kids for walks one by one; children are jealous of each other; regressive desires to be cuddled up in one’s arms; parents always promise and children blindly believe; parents treat children differently and take each of them home for different periods of time; brother lives in a different children care home; grandmother used to visit, she died, now no one visits; grandmother visits with grandfather, and auntie too; they cannot go to their parents’, they live somewhere else now, they do not have money, they have other kids, they do not have a mobile phone...
Categories	There is a more regular and intense contact with one parent; the other parent is ignored, perceived as the weaker one, there are tendencies to always find excuses for them; children get constant disappointments from their parents’ promises; if they are less in contact with the mother, they despise her more than they would the father if it was the other way around; in case of family violence, there is a categorical rejection of any connection the parents; grandparents and other relatives create emotional backing for the children; parents take siblings home, or for walks, individually one by one making children jealous of each other
Concepts	Children without a contact with their parents are appreciative of their life in the children’s care home; if children have an occasional contact with one of the parents, they have regressive desires towards them

Table 3.
Children and the emotional development—parents.

Codes	Telephone contact with godmother, with uncle; siblings usually stick together in pairs if they got to the foster home together; as if they did not have a capacity for more than a coalition of two; outside of the coalition if they are step-siblings, but they were problematic together, which is why they had to leave the family; she likes her sister because they play together; brother beats them; they do not know where are the other siblings, but they do not care; they know the names of specific employees of the children’s care home when they like them; when I am said I go to my sister, brother (from the coalition of two), miss (care worker), I hide in my bed alone and I cry; Mum’s boyfriend stabbed her with a knife, and brother as well... I was afraid; they took us away
Categories	Siblings divide themselves into real- and step-siblings; children pair up in sibling coalitions of two and are actively aggressive towards third, and other; the child outside this coalition is perceived as problematic, the one who is responsible for their punishment; at a time of emotional crisis, children seek closeness of the sibling from their coalition, occasionally a care worker, but they are often alone; no one is then helping the children to process heavily traumatic events
Concepts	As if the children did not have a potential to be close to more than one sibling The strongest coalitions form with children who came to foster care together—they have a common crisis history that leads to a stronger mutual bond The sibling who is “outside” this coalition is actively and passionately hurting the coalition of two with No one is helping the children to process the traumatic events witnessed and experienced by them (the murder of smaller brother, attempted murder of mother and older brother) Children do not know the reasons why they had to leave their own families, or even foster families, and thus they are creating incorrect cognitive schemes

Table 4.
Children and the emotional development—others.

biological mother, who is not constituted to connect the children. This is probably an occurrence of disorganized relationship attachment [36]. Mentally or physically weaker siblings form a coalition in the foster home against the stronger sibling and

Codes	Camp love; good director—but she split me and brother up as a punishment, she sent him to a different city; I do not like my sister because I have not been with her since when I was small; she can punish us, because she likes to; I have a best friend in blue shirt (does not know his name); he likes miss Silvia, the other one likes miss X; sisters are getting on his nerves; professional parent was beating him until he peed himself; then he was beating X and he died; he does not like Maja because of her crossed eyes; he was saying that X was bad (professional foster parent), but no one was listening to; they had to leave his foster family because one of the brother was always hitting people; he hates him now... they packed us up and we had to go... their money disappear; then it was found but they did not take us back...she brought us out things but never came back after that (professional foster mother)... we hid ourselves in the car boot so they cannot take us; if it was not for Mateo they would take us back...; the foster mother hit us sometimes; day and night carers alternate in the children's care home; we always know who has the night shift; the miss that was here when I came has now left... she was here the longest; at school, at summer camp and also outside there are always just kids from foster care.
Categories	Children's home management is perceived by the children as someone who fatalistically decides their fate (to what school they go, how the siblings are split) Children who are in a children's care home since their birth do not have strong bonds to either friends or staff; professional foster parents are perceived as those who require order and discipline and children have learned a lot of activities with them, which they mention with joy; children sensitively register the night staff; They do not understand the context of why they left their families; all kids in the child's surrounding environment are from foster care
Concepts	In some ways, the worker who has been with the children the longest is very important An important role is played by "night workers"—the children perceive them as those who are not employed in the care home as you do not sleep at your place of work. They attribute them a "partial parenthood" Children liked it at professional foster families', but they had a regime, discipline and duties. Although these were limiting them in some ways, they would still prefer to stay there. The children then come to the social environment as an isolated community of children from foster care

Table 5.
Children, their relationships.

fight him actively. The policy of the state, however, states that siblings have to be together. Even in a case of a family with numerous children who do not have any emotional relations among themselves. As it happens, one of the siblings might not be with his behavior accepted by professional or foster family and therefore, has to leave the family. But with him go all the other siblings. The hatred of others towards him only grows on strength. As early as 2010, Bowlby pointed out that there is a higher probability of an unstable emotional connection in children with experience of pathological circumstances in the family and then with the residential environment. This results in different forms of social learning, weaker adoption of family patterns and social skills [37–40]. The antagonism in sibling relationships is supported by the biological parents, grandparents, other relatives, who when visiting, take only one or two children for a walk, because they could not manage more. The frequency of visits is so small, that parents forget which child they took for a walk last time, and end up always taking the child with the least problematic behavior, which only encourages the reciprocal jealousy. When talking to children, an interesting phenomenon has popped up—children “stamp” themselves as well as their siblings. Almost fatalistically they accept that “he takes the bad behavior after mum.” Even despite the fact that they have no common family history, that they cannot possible remember what their mother was like. The children accept this sad inheritance in spite of not being able to consider its truthfulness and despite the negative connotation they support it.

Children were not living a harmonious life in their families and since their birth were usually put through many emotional stress situations. The strongest one was

for most of them the act of being taken away from the family. Some children went through it many times in their short lives. Children do not know the official reason for being taken away from the family, for which they were put into that particular foster home, or professional family. So they think by themselves, or they take over the arguments from older sibling, roommate or an angry employee. They carry the stigma of the “one who made problems their whole life.”

Children, who did not grow up in a family but have been “institutionalized” since birth, create only very vague relationships. They do not even know the name of their best friend (that one in the red shirt), they do not know what they get from which employee, they live through the changes in roommates completely smoothly—as in a hospital, one leaves, and another comes. Exactly the aspect of “at the moment” situation is the most important in their living; children do not plan their life ahead.

The relationship with their biological or foster parents is built mostly on how the child leaves the family. Children have the tendency to apologize the parents from the failure to raise children. They are constantly being let down by false promises of their parents about being taken home, buying them a new phone, taking them shopping or to a restaurant and so on. It functions on the same mechanism as an addiction. The cycle of hope alternates with feelings of hopelessness.

When creating a model of hypothetical ideal home and in forming images of their own future, the children have completely refused their parents and erased them completely from their imaginary. If the child had not an easy time living with his family, he creates only quick and shallow human relationships which the child leaves with the same easiness. The child often changes persons on which he fixates and disengages with the smallest and the pettiest impulse [41–43].

Their parents do not believe in their own parental competencies and it would be the best for them to just visit their children right in the building of the foster home or they would take the children to a restaurant or playground that is the nearest to the foster home. The children like to flaunt others with the fact that somebody came to visit them, on the other side they miss the feeling of having their parents just for themselves. Parents, very childishly, promise attractive things. Both parents and their children in foster home know will never come true. Despite that, the disappointment and hope are two most frequented emotions the child feels towards his parents. The child knows that the parent is lying, but still he defends the parent from himself but mostly from others, and always believes to be consequently disappointed.

The great advantage for the child and the staff is if the children stay in contact with their biological family. These impulses from the side of relatives bring up false hope (maybe he will take me) which results in the disappointment of the child. On the other hand, it increases the confidence of the child and his “value” in the eyes of other children in the foster home that have no contact whatsoever with their relatives. The children can very categorically define their “non-love” towards parents, but would not say the reason for the world. The children who left their family for very dramatic reasons have built a basis for creating and keeping the relationships with other people. These children usually have a person at the foster home or in the close surroundings that they like, seek when they have problems or when they are sad: janitor, auntie in a home, Patrik. Even according to the author Roháček [44], traumas of children in foster care can also be induced by the alternation of educators, the existence of working time, etiquetation, and a lower emotional engagement.

The life in professional families is perceived by the foster children as good in principal, but they “had to” work a lot there. Only after further conversation we have realized that children in professional families usually did only what the

children living in functional biological families do. Only in confrontation with the regime approach of the foster home the children felt, like they have to work a lot. They appreciated, that they learnt some concrete skills in professional families and these they take as their own virtues. Leaving the professional family have not been consulted at all with them, therefore they make their own wrong cognitive schemes.

The relationship of children towards things has several specifications as well. The children at foster home have shared stuff. That is common in biological families as well. But besides shared stuff has each member of the family their own personal stuff. Presents from sponsors are given to the children from foster home—ergo, to all of them. The only “other” thing the child can buy for himself either from his very humble pocket money or gets it from relatives. The pocket money is usually spent on sweets. If the parent or the grandparent manages to give something to the child for birthday or Christmas, the thing functions as an attraction, mainly for other children at the foster home. It should support character, privilege and uniqueness of the gifted. But with time children stop envying, because the thing becomes banal. The gift loses its value, so after a very short period of time it is damaged or thrown among other toys at the foster home. Because the children do now experience the ownership of things, they cannot build their “ownership” to people. It is even better to say that relationship building is very flat, shallow short-termed. The value of owned things is insignificant for the child with which is also connected the non/living of the sense of responsibility for something. Useful things, such as pyjamas, undergarment, pens and pencil cases and other, are not chosen by smaller children, but are bought by the staff of the foster home together. Therefore, even the things for children look like “foster” and loose on individuality. Because the children only seldom participate actively on running the household of the foster home, they have no real idea that the rent and energies have to be paid. All of the children would like to live in a house when they grow up, because one must pay for a flat! The older children wait for being 15 years old so that they can find a part-time job and buy whatever they want from the money they will earn.

5.4 Capability 7

Practical thinking is option to create goodness, actively plan one’s life, option to realize one’s own plans **Table 6**.

5.5 Capability 8

Other living creatures are to have the option to relive the relationship with animals, plants **Table 7**.

In view of the results of the analysis, we have decided to include this capability, albeit in a slightly altered form. Very specific is the relationship of children to things that are not living.

5.6 Capability 9

Game is option to play, entertain and relax **Table 8**.

5.7 Capability 10

Control over one’s own environment is to have the right to engage, associate and protect one’s own work, as well as to own a property **Table 9**.

For the children is somehow very important the fact how long a member of staff works at the foster home. Senior staff is preferred more, although that does

Codes	Have a normal family; not seven children; have a peaceful life; family home—no need to pay the rent; silence; few children; I teach them to do something; have dogs; certainly not to my mother; to live with my mother and sister, but not with my brothers; he does not know what will be after he leaves the children's home; wants to stay in the city, close to the children's home; wants to keep dogs and owls; does not want any children; wants to be a painter; she wants to be a baker—her sister too (not really); he would like to be a chef on a ship and make a lot of money (in fact, he does not even cook and he does not like it); wants to be a cop; she does not know what she's going to do—she's talking to a psychologist; wants to go to the capital—there's a lot of chances for life; he does not want a family; he will return to his children's home to see his friends (he does not understand passing of time); to see his small brothers; she wants to have three kids but with only one man
Categories	The image of the ideal home certainly does not include the birth parents or a lot of children; the profession of a chef is popular among the children, because this school is attended by many foster care children and you can make good money on a ship; if they say that they cook in the children's care home, it is only because they can be alone with "the miss" in the kitchen and they have her all for themselves in that moment; living in a family home, because they consider this being without costs; they will be returning to the children's care home (time factor)
Concepts	Children fatalistically accept their life and professional career—someone more powerful (children's care home management) has already planned it for them and they are able to accept it without questioning it The concepts of one's own family relate to none or maybe 1–2 children with a stable partner living in a quiet and peaceful family home

Table 6.
Ideas and plans for the future.

Codes	He got a bike from his auntie, it is only his and no one else can take it—he does not know where it is now; she got a doll from her mum (loves her), she took its head off and then legs; there are still other dolls in the children's home; I share a wardrobe with my sister; she does not have anything that is just hers; everything is ours; she does not want anything that's only hers—what for?; mum has promised to buy them a mobile phone; she will be calling a baby to Austria with it; the godfather is nice, he bought a pistol for him, but he threw it away; if a roof is broken in a family house, a repairman comes and he does it for free because he is a repairman; they would like some money for soda; she got a microphone for Christmas, but she does not know where it is anymore; her mother has bought her pyjamas, she only has one pair, but there are a lot of others in the drawer and so she will take a different one; if the bike gets broken a new one will be bought
Categories	Children get things from the people they care about; for a while, these gifts make them feel special, but then they do not matter at all; money is of great value to them, because they bring short-term pleasures; they are not aware of the running costs of a home
Concepts	Children do not bond with things just as they do not bond with people. They are unable to define their own "self" against other children, not even through material things

Table 7.
Relationship to material things.

not mean he is liked more. Maybe, there is a certain form of assurance in it. An important person for the children is the night worker, even though same six workers switch regularly. In a way it can mean for the children that when the staff comes during the day, they are employees at a job (everyone works during the day), but the night shift means they are “coming home.”

The children do cleaning chores without objections, but in food preparation they participate only little and sporadically. They perceive it more as an opportunity to have a worker besides only for themselves during cooking. From aunties and nurse-maids the children receive some instructions to fulfill their duties, but at the same time they know that these would not check properly upon them, therefore the children do not take them seriously. However, this results also in social habits not being

Codes	They will be with their sister during the holidays (she is in a boarding school)—only the two of us here in care; they will go to a summer camp; the children's care home will be locked and all of us go to a summer camp—everyone from care; they do not want to go home to their parents; from one summer camp to another one; up to three different camps during one summer holiday; mostly there are just kids from foster care; I look forward to the pool and water at summer camp; he goes with the brothers that he does not like; she and her sister play as doctors and the other one wants to play as well, she is ruining the game for them; Christmas is a holiday when school is off and there are fairy tales in television; after school they are running around on the children's home's yard; if the bike is not broken, they ride it; they play football; the nice night shift miss lets them go on computer; they watch football on it and play games
Categories	Children spend the summer at camps; over the year they run around children's care home and the yard there; they do not attend any after school activities; everywhere there are just "foster" kids around; they do not want to go to their parents'; Christmas has the importance of free time and fairy tales watching
Concepts	During the school year children spend their free time running around the children's care home and its yard without a proper focus or a goal. The staff take holidays during the summer, the children's care home is being renovated and in the meantime the children are sent to summer camps. They again spend the time in the closed communities of children from foster care

Table 8.
Entertainment, play, and free time in the children's care home.

Codes	In the children's care home no one is restricting me; if it's our turn we clean up; we do not cook; we do not do the shopping; I can do laundry; there is a miss here who has been with me since I was little; we have freedom—I can go, but I have to tell; I am not being hungry; I can ask for stuff and they give me; I get some allowance but I spend it straightaway; we usually study in the canteen at a table; the menu us at the office with the social worker; dirty clothes go to the bathroom; torn clothes go to the miss; he spends his allowance on soda and sweets and then it's gone!; it is always so loud in the children's home, a lot of shouting, a lot of children; things for hygiene are bought by the misses; at the social worker's office there are locked photos, birth certificates—they allow me there if I want; I always know which night staff is on shift; one cannot eat what one wants—they always make a menu for a whole week; the regime here is terrible; I would not change anything here; I would like to have freedom
Categories	The children will obey the scheduled shifts for cleaning and serving planned meals according to the weekly menu; they would like to get more money to buy more sweets—however they do not complain about the system for allowances; they do not like to noise made by other children in the home, sometimes even the regime, but they cannot really imagine a different way of life
Concepts	The children fatally accept the regime of the social institution and they do not actively fight it. In an increase of their financial income they see a promise of freedom—mainly in how much they can buy from it. They are unable to make use of a freedom in experience, as once the regime relaxes a little, they instantly get bored

Table 9.
Life in a children's care home.

confirmed in their behavior. Dixon and Stein [45], Stein [46, 47] also suggest that the probability of homelessness in children from foster care is rising by the absence of practical skills in obtaining housing, by the presence of debts, or by inadequate relationships with the roommates. Lukšík et al. [48], also Lukšík and Lukšíková [49] emphasizes the importance of stability and continuity of the system as a basic tool in preventing homelessness of young people from foster care. An interesting fact is that the children do not perceive negatively having always to accommodate to new. They are only disturbed by a great amount of screaming children and “it gets on their nerves.” The life in the foster home seems like too organized, therefore

restricting. They cannot use an occasional freedom (freer regime during holidays) to their own advantage and usually they become bored. The foster home is perceived as one big small world. The same people live in it. The same people are at home, at school, those same attend summer camp, and those same children play outside on the playground. They “rely” only on themselves.

In the hypothetical model of an ideal picture of their own home the children cannot or will not imagine their own parents. A normal home, according to their imagination, looks like this: in a family house (for which one does not have to pay) lives a family with one, two children max. In no case they would let their biological parents “inside” this ideal world not even when they idealize their parents on the outside.

All want to leave the foster home once and live somewhere else. The answer for the question where would they return from the world is the foster home. But they wish to find only friends there, ignoring the time shift. After our objection, that those same friends will grow up and leave, they say they would then return back to their siblings.

Identity has been the last category that is more or less connected with all the basic capabilities. The most problematic seems to be the absence of an individual approach towards children, living in the foster home. We have noticed a weak ability of self-reflection up to non-criticism towards real abilities, which can probably be the result of defenses. The children are non-critical towards their real abilities even when they did not try out the stated activity. With the reaction from the surroundings outside of the foster home they go into defense, because in reality they are usually the aim of attack or laugh for their social background. They are not lead to, and no one guides them, to learn how to endure confrontation, to accept it as a challenge for their further growth and not as another proof of their failure. All this leads to a strange type of behavior, to which children from the “normal” population do not know how to react properly, thus the “fosters” get back to isolation. Fico and his research team has found [34], that in the area of social identity, a child can be labeled a “foster child” or “state child,” which then can act as a barrier while searching for housing, or prospective employment. Their personal stuff are locked in a locker of a social worker, because they would lose them. Their personal identity takes on the identity of the room where they live in.

Most of the children is not able to anchor in firmer relationships. Younger children presented their regressive desires. The living through unprocessed sadness is cured by anger and aggression.

The children do not build their own career, they only passively accept their fate and when they reach the adulthood, they lose the restricted assurances and cannot lead their own life. In a better case, one enters the foster home midway (prolongation of the problem) or ends up on the streets.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to describe the research findings about the life of children living in the foster home of the so-called family type, considering the phenomenon of capability. We have stemmed from the theoretical concept of Martha Nussbaum and her 10 capabilities, out of which we have followed only five. The challenge for us was to search for the capability at the foster home of family type and we wanted to see how can this state institution ensure such a life for the children they would want and could live?

We dare to make some references at the end. However, we are not entirely sure that we form these references again only from the point of view of adults who know the best what is good for the children.

Child must experience at least for a while functioning in a family. Otherwise, the child knows nothing about sharing tasks, roles, and does not experience the feeling of responsibility—for himself, for things, animals or people. Only then the child is able to form lasting relationships. If the child must leave the family, someone must talk with him about it, analyze his part in this act and help him understand it. Teach the children to decide systematically and take responsibility for decisions. The absence of responsibility is a phenomenon they acquire from their biological family.

The child cannot live in two residencies at the same time. This way overrides the adaptive skills of any one the siblings, who for various reasons do not feel their family affiliation, cannot be force to relive it, so that feelings of guilt and anger towards sibling will not stem from it. Family identity should get a chance, but not a forced one, because one can repair only what truly exists.

The share of the children on household chores should be higher, in a case the staff is occupied, the volunteers should be brought in. First and foremost, with the imitation of others they would learn about “household,” about spending free time. Their abilities to live their own life are developed this way and the children would not fall into hopelessness of not being able to live without organizing their life by the foster home or other social “greenhouse.”

The child should get, considering his options and skills, an individual care, so that the personal identity of an individual is developed instead of the identity of the “foster.” We should build child’s personality more and support a positive confidence and self-evaluation and teach the child self-reflection, so that he does not become a laughing stock outsider of the society.

Help parents and profit parents, and other relatives, to handle visits of children, written contacts with children and short visits in a way that does not scare them and they would not end the contact with children from the fear of offices returning their children back into their care and them not handling it that well again.

It would be interesting to research the perception of time dimension, as well as the ability of self-reflection in children living in a residential care.

Our chapter has been called mirage. The image, that a very tired person sees somewhere in the distance and one just needs to take one step and all will be fine. Such a mirage is a family for the children living in the foster homes of family type. An image, that vanishes into thin air.

Acknowledgements

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this chapter. This chapter was created with the support of the Grant of Slovak Research and Development Agency APVV N. 16-0205 titled Identification of mechanisms for early diagnosis CAN syndrome.

Conflict of interest

The author of this chapter declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this chapter.

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