**PROBLEMATIZNG TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD FOR YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE**

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**1) Objectives:** The objective of this PhD study was to understand how transition to adulthood for young people with developmental disabilities (DD) is constituted as a problem in policies and practices across Ontario sectors (e.g., rehabilitation, education, and developmental services) and the implications for these young people and their parents. Policies or courses of action have been proposed, which predominantly frame the problem as a service transition issue. This framing is shaped by both explicit and implicit understandings about key concepts (e.g., disability and adulthood), which function to construct transition as a particular *kind* of “problem” and play a key role in what is considered, but also what is not considered or potentially neglected, left silent or even ignored. Thus, policies can have both beneficial and unintended harmful consequences for the health, well-being and daily life circumstances of young people with DD and their families. The research questions were:

1. What is the “problem” of transition to adulthood for young disabled people represented to be: a) in policies; and b) by parents of young people with DD?
2. What assumptions underlie these representations of the “problem”?
3. What effects on parents are produced by these representations of the “problem”?

**2) Method:** Guided by a critical approach and a policy analysis tool proposed by Carol Bacchi (2009), I used a multimethod qualitative design (e.g., analysis of three key policy documents and in-depth interviews with 13 parents) to examine how transition to adulthood is constituted as a problem in the policies and parents’ accounts of their transition experiences.

**3) Results:** Taken-for-granted assumptions about “normal” ways of being, becoming and acting as an adult shaped implicit understandings of disability and development as “problems” to be addressed in childhood and beyond. Policies shaped by these assumptions had positive effects (e.g., access to transition planning supports), but also unintended negative effects (e.g., experiences of social exclusion, and parental stress and fatigue).

**4) Discussion/Conclusions:** Rethinking the “problem”, such as embracing disability as a dimension of social difference and directing attention to family life course transitions, can mitigate the unintended harmful consequences of transition policies and practices on the health and daily lives of young people with DD and their parents. This research suggests that a variety of traditional and alternative options for living a good life as an adult should be supported and given equal attention and consideration in transition policies and practices. Service providers should discuss the potential consequences of all options for both the young person and their family members as part of transition planning.

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