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‘I CAN ACTUALLY LOOK AFTER MYSELF’: CONTESTED VULNERABILITY FOR GIRLS IN SECURE CARE

Abstract:

In 2010 two hundred and sixty children entered secure accommodation from England and Wales. Of these, fifty one percent were placed because they were on remand or sentenced for committing a serious offence. Thirty seven percent were placed by social services for their own protection under a child welfare order. The remaining twelve percent were held under both classifications simultaneously. The premise for housing seemingly vulnerable young people alongside potentially serious offenders, despite their differing legal status, is that residents are all ‘children first and foremost’ and it is therefore assumed that their needs will be the same. This binding of children as a single category makes a strong assertion about the capabilities and limitations of children and their competencies. This ESRC funded research uses participatory methods to explore girls’ perspectives of the contradictions surrounding the idealised notions of childhood and the twinning of childhood with vulnerability.

Keywords:

Young people, identity, social work, childhood

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