Integrating Child Welfare and Mental Health Practices: Actualizing Youth Permanency Using the 3-5-7 Model

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Overview

Most youth living in out-of-home care within the child welfare system have experienced traumatic events and confused feelings associated with their life experiences, and, frequently, they experience an array of emotional and behavioral responses to those hurtful events. At the core of these behaviors is the trauma of loss: primary losses of living in abusive, neglectful familial relationships that challenge normal developmental opportunities; and secondary losses that result from living with multiple caregivers in uncertainty, strangeness, and without feelings of security and safety in relationships (Pecora, White, Jackson, & Wiggins, 2009). Often, these youth have limited information about family history and events, and even where and how their family members are doing, after their removal from their families. These experiences and limited information challenge a youth's ability to adjust to the changes brought about by an out-of-home placement (regardless of the reason), and an ability to trust that adults will be there for protection, support, and guidance.

How do we ensure that youth who have been traumatized by life experiences are ready for permanency, as they navigate the uncertainty of where and with whom they will be engaging in relationships? How do we support their actualization of lifelong relationships? How do we reduce the number of youth with mental health diagnoses related to multiple out-of-home placements? This article will discuss a relational practice methodology, the 3-5-7 Model, which is a promising practice and core approach that supports permanency work with older youth. Various permanency types, including the absence of permanency, mental health symptoms unique to foster youth, and relationship barriers, will be identified. Programs implementing the model will be highlighted, including those pursuing family finding and engagement, and youth and family team meetings. Finally, limitations and

suggestions for future directions in using the 3-5-7 Model will be discussed.

As an introduction to the central concept, the 3-5-7 Model provides an approach to helping youth do the work of grieving losses associated with primary family experiences of abuse, neglect, and separation, and with secondary experiences of living in foster care and group placement so that they might move forward in renewed, supportive, and permanent family relationships and connections. For those older youth with a goal of independent living, or for those about to "age out" of placement, the 3-5-7 Model provides a short-term approach to engaging them in preparation for living on their own with both the skills and the supportive, enduring relationships needed.

By their engagement in activities that help to *clarify* these losses and give meaning to past events, and guided by professionals, families, and caregivers, youth are provided with opportunities to explore and express emotions about these losses. Youth are able to *integrate* past and current relationships through the exploration of feelings about those relationships making decisions about integral persons with whom they desire to develop relationships and/or remain connected. As youth engage in clarification and integration activities, their work of resolving losses and giving meaning to relationships lends to their ability to *actualize* permanency in family relationships.

These three tasks—clarification, integration, and actualization—support the answering of five conceptual questions that frame the work of forming and developing identity, grieving losses, exploring attachments, and building emotionally safe and secure relationships with birth families, guardians, or adoptive families that can support the transition to adulthood. Seven interpersonal skill elements set the tone and philosophy for this work (Henry, 2005). This is the core work of the 3-5-7 Model.

Defining Permanency

Establishing permanency with youth who receive child welfare services due to family and caregiving disruptions has been an ongoing challenge for many years. What is permanency, and how do we define it as a basis for the work being done to minimize the trauma that youth may have experienced?

The California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP, 2007) has defined permanency from the youth's perspective as being represented by a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable, and secure parenting relationship; love, unconditional commitment, and lifelong support; and a legal relationship, if possible.

Frey, Greenblatt, and Brown (2005) highlight four interrelated dimensions of permanence: physical, emotional, legal, and cultural, with many overlapping aspects. Youth can experience permanence in many different ways, including living in a physically and psychologically safe and stable family environment. They can also experience permanence by having a sense of belonging and feeling safe and secure with their primary attachments—family and other significant relationships that offer trust, safety, and reciprocity. Another way that youth can experience permanence is by gaining the rights and benefits of full family membership through a safe, emotionally secure, legal family status derived through reunification, guardianship, or adoption. Finally, permanence can be experienced when the youth is aware of and connected with his or her culture of origin, family traditions, racial and ethnic heritage, languages, and religion, regardless of the permanent family connection being realized.

Mental Health and the Absence of Permanency: Grief Responses

For older youth in foster care, the absence of permanency can have particularly profound

short- and long-term consequences. These consequences can be manifested by emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms that can produce significant impairments in the youth's social, emotional, and behavioral functioning across nearly all life domains (Cooper, Banghart, & Aratani, 2010; Unrau, Seita, & Putney, 2008; Freundlich, Avery, Munson, & Gerstenzang, 2006; Hines, Merdinger, & Wyatt, 2005; Niss, 1992). As noted in Table 1, there is a wide range of possible symptoms attributable, at least in part, to unresolved grief due to ambiguous losses experienced by the youth in foster care (Cohen & Mannarino, 2004; Henry, 2005; Pecora et al., 2009).

Table 1. Symptoms Associated with Separation, Grief, and Loss for Youth in Foster Care

Emotional	Cognitive	Behavioral
Depression	Hopeless/Helpless	Oppositional/Defiant
Anxiety/Shock	Suicidal ideation	Verbal/Behavioral aggression
Anger/Rage	Homicidal ideation	Not telling the truth
Emotional tantrums	Obsessive thoughts	Social withdrawal
Hypersensitive	Loss of touch with reality	Disturbed eating cycle
Over-reactive	Disbelief	Disturbed sleep cycle
Numbness	Confusion	Substance abuse
Irritability	Guilt/Self-blame	Somatic complaints

If these symptoms are viewed through the lens of unresolved grief and loss issues (Boss, 2006; Henry, 2005; Park, Mandell, & Lyons, 2009), an analogy could be drawn between these symptoms and those that might be commonly seen at a funeral (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Worden, 2008). If anyone at a funeral were to display any of the symptoms noted above, the symptoms would be accepted by others as normal reactions to the loss of the person who had died. It is this same degree of acceptance and compassion that must be considered with youth in foster care because these placements result in often unexplained separations from families, neighborhoods, and communities that still exist, leaving children and youth with a sense of ambiguous loss and, thus, unresolved grief associated with the loss and change.

The youth's emotional and relational functioning is negatively impacted by the absence of security in a family. Disruptions or ending of relationships, along with the limited opportunity to form permanent lifelong relationships, may lead to challenges in achieving emotional stability (Park et al., 2009). Many youth in foster care often struggle with having no one legally committed to them due to the termination or relinquishment of parental rights, dissolving of legal guardianship, or an adoption. Some foster youth who are dealing with the absence of enduring family relationships may begin to lose their connections with many elements of their cultural identities, as well as connection with their communities (Frey et al., 2005).

Grief is a universal human feeling and process (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Worden, 2008), since everyone ultimately experiences it. Typical sources of grief include death of loved ones, ending of relationships, loss of employment, the experience of a traumatic life event, and loss of physical or mental health. Emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions to losses depend on

a number of factors. These factors include life experience with past grief and loss situations, and current levels of social, emotional, and behavioral functioning, as well as sources of support (Worden, 2008).

Grief and Loss Unique to Youth in Foster Care

Youth in foster care experience these same sources of grief related to their placement experiences; however, they also experience sources of loss unique to being separated from family that still exists and then living in the foster care system with strangers or relative caregivers. For some youth in foster care, their layers of loss may complicate their grief process (Cooper et al., 2010; Henry, 2005).

Sources of unresolved grief unique to youth in foster care can include:

- Previous child abuse and neglect
- Ambiguous loss of parents, siblings, and other family members
  - Removal from family, community, and culture
  - Unexplained separation from parents, siblings, and/or culture
- Placement with strangers
- Changes in placement, roommates, school, and/or friends
- Uncertainty about what will happen next in their lives
- Uncertainty about whether youth will ever go home or will ever see their families again

Boss (2006) contrasts traditional loss with ambiguous loss, which is a loss in which there is no verification of death or any certainty that the youth will return to his or her pre-loss state of functioning. Because of this dynamic, the individual's grief and loss process is halted, closure is prevented, and, ultimately, he or she may experience impairment in functioning across many or all life domains (Lee & Whiting, 2007). For some youth in foster care, this experience can

occur when the parents are not able to reunify with the child who has previously been removed from their care. Often the challenge for these youth in foster care, as it relates to the grief and loss process, is that the parent continues to be present in the mind of the youth, although the youth no longer has the chance to experience the parent's physical presence.

The distinction between more traditional, clear-cut loss and ambiguous loss is important for child welfare and mental health professionals to consider because the lack of clarity about what happened, why, and whether birth parents and family members will continue to be part of youths' lives often elicits confusion, rather than resolution of feelings of grief and loss. It is this confusion that brings about the social, emotional, and cognitive challenges often experienced by youth in foster care who are struggling to understand what happened to them, and why they don't have enduring and lifelong family relationships. Too often, these youth are misdiagnosed or prescribed inappropriate medication because these ambiguous losses, and the corresponding unresolved grief, are not inherently linked to emotional and behavioral reactions.

For some youth, living with immediate or extended family members, even if in a potentially abusive or neglectful relationship, can yield a sense of belonging. An ambiguous loss—even when the loss is of a family environment of dubious safety—is particularly difficult because the people considered to be lost were supposed to love, protect, and keep the youth safe, yet failed to do so. Loss of this family through out-of-home placement, even if it means acquiring increased physical safety or that basic needs will now be met, can be experienced by the youth as a significant loss of connection and security (Cooper et al., 2010). Once the youth is in foster care, additional potential sources of loss include separation from classmates, neighbors, and activities that used to be familiar for the youth

(e.g., relationships at work, athletics, or other recreations).

While research has shown that many maltreated youth show resilience in the face of the adversity of child abuse and neglect, others struggle with mental health problems, risk-taking behaviors, social disadvantages, and physical health problems (Metzger, 2008). Caution is warranted in drawing conclusions because of methodological limitations. Metzger (2008) notes that the development of feelings of being valued promotes resilient abilities in the face of stress. Youth who successfully establish their own value through their ability to overcome negative thoughts about themselves have a protective factor for resilience. By showing "toughness," they reinforce strengths within themselves and enhance their self-value (Henry, 1999). On the other hand, many youth are placed in mental health treatment based on the assumption that they have an emotional or behavioral disorder. However, not all youth in care have or need treatment. This underscores the need to utilize careful screening and assessment methods for youth entering and remaining in foster care (Pecora et al., 2009).

Relationship Barriers to Permanency for Youth in Foster Care

When working to achieve permanency for youth in foster care, barriers (Niss, 1992) can often develop that complicate and slow down this journey toward permanency:

- Conflicted, violent, volatile, and otherwise abusive relationship history
- Fear or avoidance of entering into unconditional and loving relationships
- Absence of guaranteed, yet conditional, system-based supports once the youth exits foster care

Without having accurate information about the youths' birth family relationships, and

opportunities to grieve both traditional and ambiguous losses associated with them, youth exiting foster care and facing these barriers may experience increased social, emotional, and behavioral struggles.

As long as they lack the opportunities to grieve and resolve their losses, foster youth will likely struggle with these barriers to achieving permanency well into their adult years. Engaging youth, using the concepts and activities of the 3-5-7 Model, addresses the issues related to the absence of a secure family relationship and guides youth toward actualizing permanency by supporting them through a clarification of the events of their lives as they safely express their feelings of grief. The integration of all current and previous relationships help youth determine which adults can offer safe and secure permanent family relationships.

The 3-5-7 Model

The 3-5-7 Model consists of three (3) tasks, five (5) conceptual questions, and seven (7) interpersonal skill elements that guide activities and exercises toward assisting youth in their permanency work. The 3 tasks of clarification, integration, and actualization (Donley-Zeigler, 1996) frame the work of youth in exploring life events, separation and loss experiences, caring and hurtful relationships, and potential paths to permanent connections. The 5 conceptual questions support the work of the 3 tasks to address the issues of identity (Erikson, 1963; Van Gulden & Bartels-Rabb, 1995), loss (Rando, 1993; Jewett, 1978; Trozzi, 1999), attachment (Fahlberg, 1991), relationship building (Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990), and safety and belongingness (Henry, 1999). The 7 interpersonal elements and social work/therapist/caregiver abilities, including the attitudes and beliefs of those assisting in this work, are vital to providing the foundation for the work of the 3 tasks and 5 questions (Henry, 2005).

The concepts of the 3-5-7 Model can be implemented by all individuals who support youth who present grief behaviors. The principles of the model are particularly applicable for individuals who live with youth and/or meet with them on a regular basis. More specifically, skill workers can provide continuity of the grief work and relationship-building process by using the 3 tasks to explore the issues of the 5 questions. Successful workers, therapists, and families demonstrate the 7 skill elements.

This graphic provides a visual overview of the 3-5-7 Model.
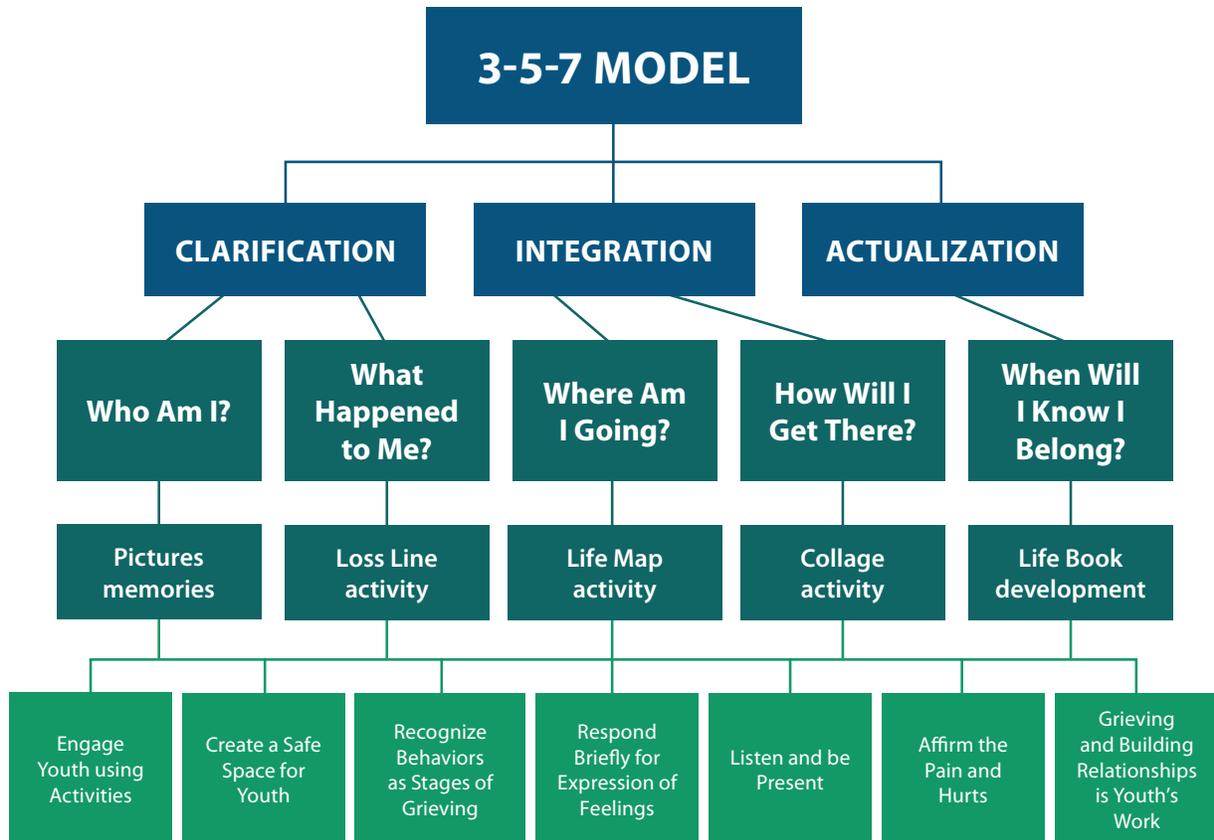
The 3 Tasks

Clarification

Clarification activities engage youth in exploring their life events, giving meaning to their emerging identities and helping them to reconcile the realities of their many separations, relationship disruptions, and losses. Through words and actions, youth express the need for clarification: "Why can't I live with my mom?" or "I don't know why I was taken away." These questions, or similar inquiries, must evoke the attention of families and workers and prompt them to engage the youth in a clarifying activity and/or discussion. Clarification provides a factual base to understand and to distinguish between what is real and what is unreal for the youth. As they learn more and remember more about their past experiences, youth are supported to safely express painful feelings, love, anger and hatred for others, fears, mistrust, and despair, as well as to more overtly experience a grieving process. When done in the presence of a listening person, on a consistent basis, the youth perceives safety and

eventually feels trust within that relationship. By remaining present to their grief, youth experience comforting responses to their need for security; the attachment cycle process has continuity and the relationship is strengthened (Fahlberg, 1991). This reflection on life events and exploration of the impact of these life events clarifies both the struggles in establishing identity and how these experiences have influenced their thinking about who they are (Donley-Zeigler, 1996; Fahlberg, 1991; Henry, 2010).

Integration

Integration activities are intertwined with ongoing clarification activities; significant people and roles are added into the youth's discussions and activities. Integration is based on a process of reviewing all past and present relationships so that youth have the opportunity to determine which relationships are and will be safely supportive of them, while also expressing feelings and thoughts of grief surrounding loss experiences within these relationships. They express statements such as, "I didn't like those people," or "I really miss my last foster mom." These expressions provide an opportunity for youth to be acknowledged, valued, and cared for in recognition of people who have been available when they needed support. It is this work that provides foundations for building permanent connections. Integration activities highlight, for the youth, the work that may need to be done to build and strengthen selected relationships, to resolve hurtful relationships, or to let go of those who will not be a part of their lives.

During integration work, youth come to accept that they do not have to choose membership in one particular family. If the youth are not expected to reunite with their biological families, they begin to deal with issues of loyalty toward biological parents and toward biological family members, loyalty issues that could inhibit the formation of succeeding permanent and lifelong relationships (Henry, 2005). Yet if reunification is planned with nuclear or extended family,

integration activities provide opportunities for youth and family to discuss and explore the relationships the youth has experienced while living in substitute care. This is an integral activity in family preparation and family engagement work (Henry, 2010).

Taking part in both clarifying and integrative activities help youth to better understand their complex histories and convey the message that their questions will be honored and that their stories will be listened to as they are supported to identify and express many confusing feelings and anxieties. This work enables youth to adopt a position of actualization when planning for their futures.

Actualization

The third task, actualization, is the visualization of permanency; that is, the sense of feeling safe and belonging; claiming an identity; and establishing a place within family or other permanent relationship. Actualization is the ability of the youth to begin to see a possible permanent future with a family, parent, or guardian as the tasks of clarification and integration are occurring and evolving. When life events are better understood, when losses have been recognized and are being grieved, when attachments and relationships are identified and continue to be explored, and when identity is more secure, youth gain confidence to see the future in relation to reciprocal connections. There is hope for safely becoming a member of a family—whether it is biological, foster, adoptive, kinship, or guardianship—when there is a sense that the potential exists for sharing a common future together. Statements and phrases such as, "I feel like one of the family," or "my mom, my dad, my sister," indicate that actualization is occurring. For many youth, actualization may be present with several families, similar to extended family relationships inherent in all family structures. In participating in clarification and integration activities, youth who working through the task of actualization make choices based on

relational permanency, which may or may not include legal permanency.

The 5 Conceptual Questions

The 5 conceptual questions guide youths' explorations of the issues of identity, loss, attachment, relationships, and security that have challenged their experiences and which have thrown them off of their developmental courses and unbalanced the stability needed for their growth (Henry, 2005). The 5 conceptual questions are woven into the activities of the 3 tasks:

1. **Who am I?** *Identity* is formulated through ongoing clarification of life experiences in relation to history, culture, and developmental influences.

2. **What happened to me?** *Loss and grief issues* are recognized and supported through clarification of events that have led to the youth not being able to live with biological parents and/or living in out-of-home placements. These might include separations and abuse events.

3. **Where am I going?** *Attachments* with past and current relationships are integrated by youth through their explorations of the meaning of those relationships, taking past and current experiences into consideration. They begin to make decisions about those with whom they want to maintain relationships and about those with whom they do not, even if contact may be limited by safety concerns. These decisions may change through developmental growth.

4. **How will I get there?** Repetition of the attachment cycle (Fahlberg, 1991), with needs being met on a consistent basis within a stable environment, encourages *relationship building*; that is, the stability and well-being that is desired in permanency connections. Understanding the attachment cycle and the interruptions to needs being met is the work of helping

youth grieve through the attachment process. Youth grieve and reconcile losses in the context of a consistent relationship (Wolfelt, 1996). As the attachment process is repeated on a continuous cycle, youth build relationships through the establishment of trust and perceptions of security and safety. During this process, youth move into the actualization phase.

5. **When will I know I belong?** Repeated interactions of reciprocal attachments, with elements of stability, continuity, and mutuality, ensure that youth and families are building more permanent relationships (Hess, 1982). When a youth feels *safe* in a relationship and families have claimed the youth as a family member, the youth eventually feels belonging within the family. For many youth, this is and will be an ongoing, lifelong process requiring steady attention and conscious effort (Henry, 2005).

While not directly asking these conceptual questions, youth who have experienced the traumas of primary loss (the result of abuse, neglect, and/or domestic/community violence) and secondary loss (alternate care placements) are wondering about or are concerned about their survival, no matter where or with whom they are living. Having experienced environments that feel unsafe to them, whether in biological homes or multiple placement homes, they search for a sense of safety (Henry, 2005). Their behaviors, comments, and questions are viewed as prompts to address issues of identity confusion, separation and loss feelings, attachment difficulties, and uncertainties about relationships. Responding to these behaviors and questions provides a guide to support their ongoing grief and relationship-building work.

The 7 Interpersonal Elements

7 interpersonal elements are identified as several of the many skills and values that are needed for those who support the work of

youth and families in grieving and relationship building. Critical skills are the ability to:

- **engage** youth and families in activities that explore their lives

- **recognize** that painful feelings are expressed in the behaviors of those who have been traumatized

- **listen** and to be present to the expression of all feelings

- **affirm** the pain and hurts from these experiences

- **be present** in order to provide the opportunity for youth to do the work of grieving their emotions and processing their losses

- **offer a safe space** where the youth is comfortable expressing these feelings

- **respond briefly** when expressing acknowledgement and assurance to youth in order to maintain space in the youth's grieving process and establish trust

Engaging youth to do the work of grieving and relationship building, using the 3-5-7 Model, requires continuity and stability of caseworker and caregiver support services. The level of trust between youth and worker during activities, and the overall intensity and duration of the relationship, suggests that the process demands and supplies both emotional and concrete support for youth (Osterling & Hines, 2006). As youth begin to reconcile their grief, they may more readily enter into deeper, intensive therapies, if needed, through mental health programs, in order to explore the impact that abusive and damaging relationships may have had on them. These 7 skill elements guide the efforts of professionals, counselors, and families as they are present to and support the grief work of the youth.

In closing this description of the elements of the 3-5-7 model, it is worth noting that the individuals in roles of support should be aware of their own grief processes so that their ongoing grief work will not become barriers to the expressions of feelings and behaviors of the youth who are working through their grief (Henry, 2010). There is no need to be an expert in grieving, but merely to be companions who witness the expressions of others who are experiencing loss, companions who validate and allow the process of grieving to occur (Wolfelt, 1996).

Applications of the 3-5-7 Model

The 3-5-7 Model has been implemented in a variety of settings, using both formal and informal organizational and program structures. Similar core practices, however, are common to all applications. These are:

1. **Continuity:** Critical to supporting the grief process and relationship building is the consistency of time. Youth should be seen every other week at a minimum, with phone contact in the interim. This establishes continuity for the work being done and provides a relationship of safety for ongoing expressions of grief.

2. **Use of Activities and Exercises:** The use of activities and exercises is critical to engaging youth in their grief and loss work. Those supporting the work of youth should be knowledgeable of and have resources for a variety of activities that encourage and support the work of clarification, integration, and actualization to explore the issues of identity, loss, attachment, and relationship building. Examples of effective activities, although there are many, include: life/loss lines, life maps, collages/puzzles, safety nets, and sand art (Henry, 2005; Jewitt Jarratt, 1982; Keck & Kupecky, 1995; Worden, 1996). Life books provide an excellent tool for continuity of the grief process. They provide a tangible and concrete account for the youth of the clarification work that they are doing, as well as a means of reflection between sessions and evidence of the

activities of clarification, integration, and actualization.

3. **Knowledge and communication skills:** Those working with youth in a caseworker role must be knowledgeable about abuse and neglect, grief and loss behaviors, adolescent development, and the dynamics of biological and placement families. Effective communication abilities for working within the teams of caseworkers, therapists, and parents who are working with each youth are needed. It is critical that workers be comfortable with teens and secure in comforting the behaviors of grief.

4. **Leadership:** Programs that use the 3-5-7 Model have been initiated by one or several individuals who have championed the work, providing the model elements individually with youth through engagement activities or creating teams to provide services, whether it be in county public agencies or in private group settings. Whether through training, pilot projects, and/or administrative support, leadership has driven the process for implementation.

5. **Training and consultation:** Training on the concepts of the 3-5-7 Model and foundational social work skills has been provided in successful applications of the model. Consultation of cases and follow-up discussions of work with youth, including program and practice implementation strategies, has also been provided. Participants have included social workers and county caseworkers, mental health therapists, group care providers, biological and resource families, former foster and adopted youth, CASA volunteers, supervisors, administrators, and community advocates.

Implementing a program that focuses on the 3-5-7 Model can be achieved by professionals who commit to the continuity of time to focus

on the 3 tasks and 5 questions of the model. Implementation can also be supported by resource families, residential caregivers, or CASA mentors. Organizations planning to implement the 3-5-7 model should provide initial training on the model to all staff who will be applying the concepts. Ongoing training ensures fidelity to the model, as well as provides the opportunity to discuss practice challenges and successes. Agency administrators and supervisors who understand the usefulness of the 3-5-7 Model can support staff in their practice of the model with youth by assuring sufficient time to provide the service.

Program Implementation

What the authors have found and observed regarding the implementation of the 3-5-7 Model, through practice experiences, provision of training and consultation, oversight of piloted projects, participation in surveys, and anecdotal feedback, has been an excitement about the practical usefulness of the model as an approach that supports the work of those grieving and experiencing trauma. While formal research has yet to be conducted on the 3-5-7 Model, it has become an informed practice that is being implemented in state and county agencies and in private organizations around the country.

The activities of the 3-5-7 Model are intended to be woven into ongoing child welfare practices with youth and families by public and private child welfare staff, resource families, residential care providers, and mental health practitioners. Caseworkers and social workers, child welfare supervisors and administrators, mental health providers, juvenile probation programs, and private practitioners, such as those providing family counseling, adolescent therapy, and play therapy, have responded positively to the use of this model as a permanency practice. Throughout California, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Delaware, and Wisconsin (in addition to other states), professionals and child care staff and parents report positive experiences to the authors in using the 3-5-7 Model. This diverse set of

people view the 3-5-7 Model as a doable approach to understanding the trauma-based and grief-related behaviors of youth and working with them to rebuild permanent relationships.

Table 2 summarizes the implementation of the 3-5-7 Model in the states listed above. Activities in California and Pennsylvania are then highlighted, as they are the focus of direct practices and program implementation by the authors. Dr. Henry has provided extensive training and consultation in both states, and Dr. Manning has provided training and consultation in California.

Table 2. State Implementation of the 3-5-7 Model

STATE	PROJECT	PROGRAM
California	Coordinated by California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP); 2007-2010. Pilot project initiated by Los Angeles county to implement the 3-5-7 Model with WRAP providers. Pilot project initiated by Kern County to evaluate the usefulness of life books to support the work of the 3-5-7 Model.	Training and consultation on 3-5-7 Model concepts provided to 15 counties and private partner agencies to support the training of Kevin Campbell, Family Finding. Additional training and consultation provided to all 18 Los Angeles county offices.
Pennsylvania	Administered by Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) through the Department of Public Welfare/Office of Children Youth and Families; federal and state funding support SWAN activities; 2003-current. Survey was conducted in 2005 to determine effectiveness of child preparation services using 3-5-7 Model concepts.	Child Preparation services, based on 3-5 7 Model concepts, are provided by private provider agencies upon referrals by county children and youth agencies. Public agencies determine the criteria for the referral. Private agencies have six months, with a minimum of 10 face-to-face contacts with the child or youth, to complete the service for payment. Compliance and best practice oversight is provided by ongoing technical assistance from SWAN regional coordinators.
New Hampshire	Administered by New Hampshire Department of Children Youth and Families throughout all counties; 2005-current.	County and private agency social workers provide permanency-based services using 3-5-7 Model concepts throughout the state.
Delaware	Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families supports statewide training to county and private provider agencies, their staff and resource families, on use of the 3-5-7 Model.	Participated in pilot project through AdoptUSKids using the 3-5-7 Model concepts to prepare youth to find families through the Internet. Project implementation was not completed.
Wisconsin	ANU Family Services provides training to resource families using 3-5-7 Model concepts in training curriculum.	Working with state to shift practices toward grief and loss process before making family connections in permanency work. Planning integration of 3-5-7 Model into current practice without adding staff.

The California Experience: 3-5-7 Model and Youth Permanency

As a practice methodology, the 3-5-7 Model has been integral to the use of family finding and engagement activities within 15 California counties. Family finding and engagement is, at its core, a relationship-building program, not a placement program (CPYP, 2007; Campbell et al., 2005; Shirk, 2006). From the CPYP perspective, any effort that leads to the establishment of healthy, loving, and long-term connections with youth in foster care can be considered successful and critically important. Whether or not reunification or other legally permanent outcomes occur as a result of the integration of family finding and engagement practices, young people in this program have reported finding meaning in the process of connecting with important family relationships for a sense of what they describe as relational permanence or emotional security.

Three programs that have implemented the 3-5-7 Model are highlighted in Table 3.

Table 3. Implementation of the 3-5-7 Model in California

COUNTY	PROJECT	SUBJECTS
Orange	County/Mental Health Collaborative for Family Finding activities	Using tools for clarification, integration, and actualization for relational permanency for 17-year-old male
Los Angeles Metro North	Wraparound residential facilities providing services to county youth	Pilot project with one youth per program; wraparound teams engaged youth using the concepts of the 3-5-7 Model toward permanency options and readiness
Kern	Public child welfare/private foster family agency (AspiraNet) to determine usefulness of life books	Pilot project with 20 identified children and youth, ages 3-18; 13 completed the program

Orange County Child Welfare and Mental Health Collaboration

An example of relational permanence is highlighted using the 3-5-7 Model in family finding and engagement activities. In Orange County, California, a collaborative approach among multiple public and private child welfare agencies served as the catalyst to implement the 3-5-7 Model (Manning, 2010). Dr. Manning served as program coordinator for implementation of the model with a team led by Richard, a 17-year-old youth in residential care who was preparing to exit the foster care system. An exhaustive family finding and engagement process was initiated to address Richard's need for a permanent family connection to support the transition to adulthood. Richard's reconnection process with his family lasted several months and included a number of flights to visit his relatives. Using the 3-5-7 Model, Richard's therapist worked closely with him to guide his journey through the tasks of clarification and integration in order to process his wide range of feelings related to being in a family. The actualization task became reality for Richard through an extended period of intense nightly text messaging with his new primary caretaking relative.

Richard's therapist continued to work with him on the 3 tasks using a Lossline—a visual representation of his history of losses and life

changes. (This Lossline represents an integral part of the therapeutic work with the youth, serving as the written road map of the youth's life.) Concurrently, work began on the creation of his life book. Richard described the life book process as an "amazing and interesting experience" as he learned more about himself and his family. Richard described the biggest success related to the project as the realization in both his heart and his mind that he truly does have permanent "family" connections beyond his immediate biological family with whom he continues to have limited contact. A portion of this success can be attributed to Richard's engagement and therapeutic work done using the

3-5-7 Model, In the end, Richard summarized, "everyone should know that they have family . . . more of this [3-5-7 Model and family finding and engagement work] should be done. I think it would change their [child welfare peers'] lives a whole lot. It is amazing."

Los Angeles County Metro North Wraparound Pilot Project

In 2008, Los Angeles County, Metro North office, conducted a pilot project with seven Wraparound provider programs, each identifying a youth for a three-month implementation program to apply the concepts of the 3-5-7 Model. Monitored by the Department of Family Services and the Department of Mental Health, the participating county and mental health staff, along with all Wraparound teams who would be working with the youth, received a one-day training on the model by Dr. Henry. Training content included the concepts of the model and how to use identified activities, such as life books, life maps, loss history charts, and collages, to engage youth in clarification, integration, and actualization tasks to explore the issues of identity, loss, attachment, relationship building, and safety in relationships. Following the training, program staff reviewed a youth's case and developed written plans, identifying roles for team members who would do activities with each youth to ensure continuity of time and application of the model concepts.

At the end of the project, six of the seven Wraparound programs (one youth did not complete the project) reported positive changes in the behaviors of the youth who had been engaged in the 3-5-7 Model program. Some of these behaviors included: less anger, more interest in working with staff, willingness to work with family members, and more interest in future planning. One Wraparound therapist showed an 11-page, computer developed, loss history chart that a 17-year-old youth had completed. The therapist used this activity to support the youth in clarification of the story of his life, identifying

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Anecdotal Applications of the 3-5-7 Model

*In **Sonoma County**, California, a supervisor used the concepts of the 3-5-7 Model to help a 12-year-old boy who was experiencing conflicting loyalties for his mother and for his prospective adoptive family. Although willing to be adopted by his foster family, he was not ready to consent to the finalization. He continued to have feelings and thoughts about "leaving his mother" and his concerns for her feelings about his adoption. This creative supervisor decided to allow for contact between the youth and his mother, even though parental rights had been terminated. After two visits, in which the young man was able to find answers to his questions, he was ready to commit to his new family, having actualized his belongingness (feelings of permanency) with them. Using the tasks of clarification and integration, the supervisor had engaged the youth in exploring his understanding of his relationship with his mother, expressing feelings of her loss, and then honoring her presence and ultimately her place in his life. He was able to actualize permanency with his adoptive family by integrating both family relationships in his future (Henry, 2010).*

the losses within many of these events. The visual history chart helped him in the integration of these events with numerous people with whom he knew and had relationships. As he identified the positives and negatives of these relationships, actualization occurred as he visualized permanency in several of these relationships, desiring to establish more secure connections with them.

Throughout the work to incorporate the 3-5-7 Model into the Wraparound process, whether it was a case-carrying worker who was the person who supported the work or a clinically trained staff member, the result was the same. All reported value in having used the model and noted enhancement in the healing process for the youth with whom they were working. The youth reported that they were able to get in touch with how their experiences had impacted their lives. Having a witness present (worker/therapist), as they re-visited the past with the purpose of making sense of it in the moment, became a corrective emotional experience for them. In every situation, application of the concepts of the 3-5-7 Model was effective in helping the youth improve their daily functioning. Wraparound staff found that youth were better engaged, related positive thoughts about doing the work of exploring past relationships, more readily expressed feelings connected with their experiences of loss, and explored permanent relationships. Los Angeles Metro North has strongly requested that these Wraparound programs, which work with county youth placed in their group homes, use the 3-5-7 Model in their permanency connections activities (Viade, 2010).

Kern County Life Book Pilot Project

In Kern County, Children and Family Services, along with partner AspiraNet, a private foster family agency, conducted a one-year (2008) pilot project with 20 children and youth, ages 3 to 18, to determine the usefulness of life books

as a tool in applying the concepts of the 3-5-7 Model. Applying the 7 skill elements throughout their engagement with youth, AspiraNet social workers approached the issues of the 5 conceptual questions of loss, identity, attachments, and secure relationships through the use of a life book with each youth. Life book activities supported the 3 tasks by providing opportunities for youth to clarify confusions of identity and expressions of feelings about losses as a result of their life events. Integration activities provided opportunities to explore past, current, and future relationships in relation to feelings of attachment and meaning. Throughout life book work, as youth were able to create a tangible, concrete product that reflected the work that they were doing, they were able to visualize more secure relationships, becoming more actualized toward permanent connections.

The results from a pre-test/post-test inventory showed overall improvement regarding depression and perceptions of youths' relationships. Depression scores significantly declined for two participants, while three maintained stable emotional states. According to project staff, of the 13 children and youth who completed the project, placement disruptions and placement changes decreased in comparison with other county placements, with nine participants having no placement disruptions during the one-year study. Three children finalized adoptions and two vocalized, for the first time, their actualization to be adopted.

Social workers who participated in this project reported that they experienced:

- Youth gaining a more realistic picture of their lives;

- Youth expressing emotions to and about integral relationships; and

- Youth being empowered to make decisions about these relationships and the place of these relationships in their lives.

- Social workers also observed that in applying the concepts of the 3-5-7 Model in the use of life books, youth,

- through clarification activities, have a way to express their voices and thoughts about the past, and have a way to work through losses toward understanding who they are;

- through integration activities, have a way to reflect on and give meaning to people in their lives so that they more realistically understand with whom they want to maintain relationships; and

- through actualization activities, have a way to build on these relationships to secure permanent connections.

Workers reported that the life book process enabled youth to have concentrated time to focus on feelings work that was supported by listening and affirming their stories and perspectives. Overall, the use of the 3-5-7 Model in Kern County has led to more staff who are consistently using these concepts in their direct casework practices. The county now requires the life book process in all family finding activities (Esquivel, 2010).

With both of these pilot projects, and the Orange County collaboration, the approaches were similar. Essential to the engagement process was the continuity of contacts with youth, the use of tools (e.g., life book, loss history chart, life maps) to explore issues, and the support of an individual to listen to and affirm the feelings and stories of a youth's life experiences from their perspectives. Within the context of support for grieving work, youth were able to find answers in the safety of a trusting relationship to explore permanency connections. Time was focused on the youth's understanding of their stories, providing information and clarifying misinformation. Youth abilities to cope with and adapt to the confusions and uncertainties were recognized. With more secure knowledge of self and recognition of strengths, youth were empowered to engage in the building of relationships that had the potential for permanency.

The Pennsylvania Experience

In Pennsylvania, the 3-5-7 Model is used as a service of the Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN), which has incorporated the model as the core of child preparation services provided to the county child welfare agencies through private agency providers. Implemented since 2004, services are intended to prepare children and youth for all options for permanency. The preparation work may be provided in group and/or individual sessions. Each child or youth engaging in child

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Anecdotal Applications of the 3-5-7 Model

*Two stories of engaging youth for family reconnections, after family finding activities were conducted, came from **Fresno** and **San Luis Obispo counties**. In Fresno County, the worker connected a 16-year-old youth with previously unknown family in Virginia. After training and consultation on the 3-5-7 Model, the worker approached the youth's concerns and apprehensions in the context of his loss feelings and grief behaviors. The youth's ability to understand his feelings and actions in relation to grief behaviors enabled the worker to be present and respond to his reactions of anticipation and uncertainty. Her availability to him to process these feelings provided assurance and the opportunity to clarify his life events of the past so that he was able to conduct a conscious integration of potential new relationships with these current family connections, actualizing permanency in his family relationships (Henry, 2010). While not physically living with family in Virginia, he has achieved relational permanency, knowing that he experiences the security of being connected to family.*

preparation activities is required to have a life book that reflects the tasks they have done in clarification, integration, and actualization that support their grief work and relationship-building processes. Since 2007, all youth with a goal of independent living have been required to receive this preparation service to assure that they have a permanent relationship connection when they leave care.

Although a limited survey was conducted with county and private agency workers one year into implementation of the service, no follow-up research has been done. The initial survey was conducted to determine if the program, as developed, was being effective in the work of engaging youth in preparation for permanency. Results revealed the overall effectiveness of preparation services and the use of the 3-5-7 Model, supporting the continuation of this work. Using Likert scaled questions, resulting in a mean score of 4.61/5.0, county and private agency worker responses noted the following:

- Caretakers developed empathy to assist youth in their care to deal with grief instead of reacting to behavior issues.

- Some youth were able to discuss and acknowledge the past, having received the message that it is okay to grieve.

- Improved self-identity was observed; life book activities helped boost self-esteem, increasing self awareness.

- Information led to increased understanding of youth stories and reasons for placements.

- For older youth in independent living situations, the model provided clarification of background and time in placement.

- Youth became more self-sufficient and empowered, having a better understanding of options for decision making in establishing permanent relationships.

Overall, child preparation services, using the core concepts of the 3-5-7 Model, are an established practice toward assuring that youth have opportunities to engage in activities that lead to permanency relationships.

Discussion and Practice Implications

The 3-5-7 Model provides another foundational practice for the development of programs that provide a supportive grieving and relationship-building network for youth who are experiencing family disruptions. Youth who have engaged in this work have been empowered to explore permanency in relationships from a place of resolution of past experiences and confidence for the future.

The beauty of the 3-5-7 Model is that it provides a methodology to help youth bring the past forward to identify and find lost family and significant adult relationships that have the potential to become permanency resources in the present and to support the youth in the future.

The model brings into practice a perspective that youth have the strengths to reconcile their past losses, including painful family separations, and to heal from these experiences doing the work of creating lasting connections with others. How will we build on their resiliencies and assets, in their desires to live "normal" lives?

Implementation of the 3-5-7 Model has been used from both formal and informal practice perspectives. Results have demonstrated that the model can be effectively applied in both private and public agency settings to achieve both permanence and family connections with youth who too often are considered to be unable to achieve permanence. States and county child welfare organizations have created agency structures within which to provide the services connected to the model. Private agency family service providers have incorporated the concepts of the model into permanency practices. Group

and residential providers have integrated model activities in core child care programs. Informally, the 3-5-7 Model has been incorporated into the practices by those who have attended trainings, enhancing their attention to the grief work of those youth with whom they do permanency work.

Questions continue as to implementation strategies with this population of youth and their families. What can be done by existing staffs to incorporate the 3-5-7 Model into current practice

Anecdotal Applications of the 3-5-7 Model

In **San Luis Obispo County***, a permanency specialist used the 3-5-7 Model to prepare a 14-year-old youth for reunification with his mother and sister who were living in Wyoming. Reunification with the mother was uncertain as a permanency resource for him since it had been three years since her son had lived with her and they had had limited contact over that time. The specialist and county worker had numerous discussions with the mother by phone to support her concerns, most specifically the grief feelings that she had experienced regarding the situation of her son not living with her. The sister was also included in these discussions regarding loss feelings for her brother. Engaging the youth in a variety of exercises and activities, the specialist guided his work in clarification of his life events, wherein he expressed various feelings related to the losses in his life, and the integration of his family living experiences, giving meaning to numerous relationships, so that he could actualize (envision) the possibility of living again with his mother and sister. Eventually, he made the trip to Wyoming, with a positive reunion outcome. Contact and visitation were continued for several months and reunification resulted when the youth expressed his readiness to return to live with his mother (Henry, 2010).*

applications? An important rebuttal to the frequently raised concern about staffing capacity is that this work can be done with existing staff or staff dedicated to focused work using the 3-5-7 Model. Staff can also be assigned to focus specifically on youth who are receiving services in family finding and engagement activities.

Having been implemented in a variety of settings over the past six years, anecdotal accounts of the use of the 3-5-7 Model have indicated its importance as a viable practice approach to support the work of youth in establishing permanent relationships. Positive responses to the concepts of the 3-5-7 Model have been encouraging for the continuation of this work. Ongoing training and consultation is essential to support the efforts of a wide range of public and private organizations who have been implementing, and desire to implement, 3-5-7 Model programs.

Suggestions for Research

Outcomes reported have been anecdotal based on relational practice applications of the 3-5-7 Model. Results from across the country indicate the importance for research and evaluation of the application and effectiveness of the 3-5-7 Model. Questions for inquiry might include:

- Does actualization indicate capacity for permanency as youth engage in clarification and integration work?

- How is strength of permanency relationships determined as a result of 3-5-7 Model work?

- Can success for youth in "new" permanency families be predicted?

- How does continuity of service delivery impact the work of the 3-5-7 Model?

- Are suggested tools (life book, life map, loss line) for engagement and issues resolution effective?

- How is the work impacted by the skills of those engaging youth?

- What are indicators of where youth are in their grief stages and attachment difficulties? What baseline would this provide to assess the work being done in these areas?

- What impacts do variables of age, gender, race/ethnicity, mental and physical ability, individual and/or group modalities have on the outcomes of 3-5-7 Model work?

- Are youth behaviors indicative of mental health diagnoses or of grief stages? How might a distinction between the two recommend interventions? What behaviors/attitudes might indicate resiliency factors?

- How does practice integration of the 3-5-7 Model impact the achievement and sustainment of permanency for youth while in foster care and after they exit foster care?

Likewise, as the 3-5-7 Model is applied to family finding and engagement work and to family group programs, it will be necessary to evaluate whether the model leads to secure permanency relationships for youth and their biological families. Longitudinal studies toward assuring youth permanency are encouraged to determine outcomes for application of the 3-5-7 Model.

Current anecdotal outcomes, in combination with stronger research data, will provide valuable information to this field of permanency practice. Significant research results will encourage funding for the implementation of the 3-5-7 Model in a broader context as a viable approach to child welfare practices.

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