

# Permanently Progressing? Building Secure Futures for Children in Scotland

- Scottish Attachment in Action (SAIA) : Why attachment matters in research
- 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018
- Dr Helen Whincup, University of Stirling

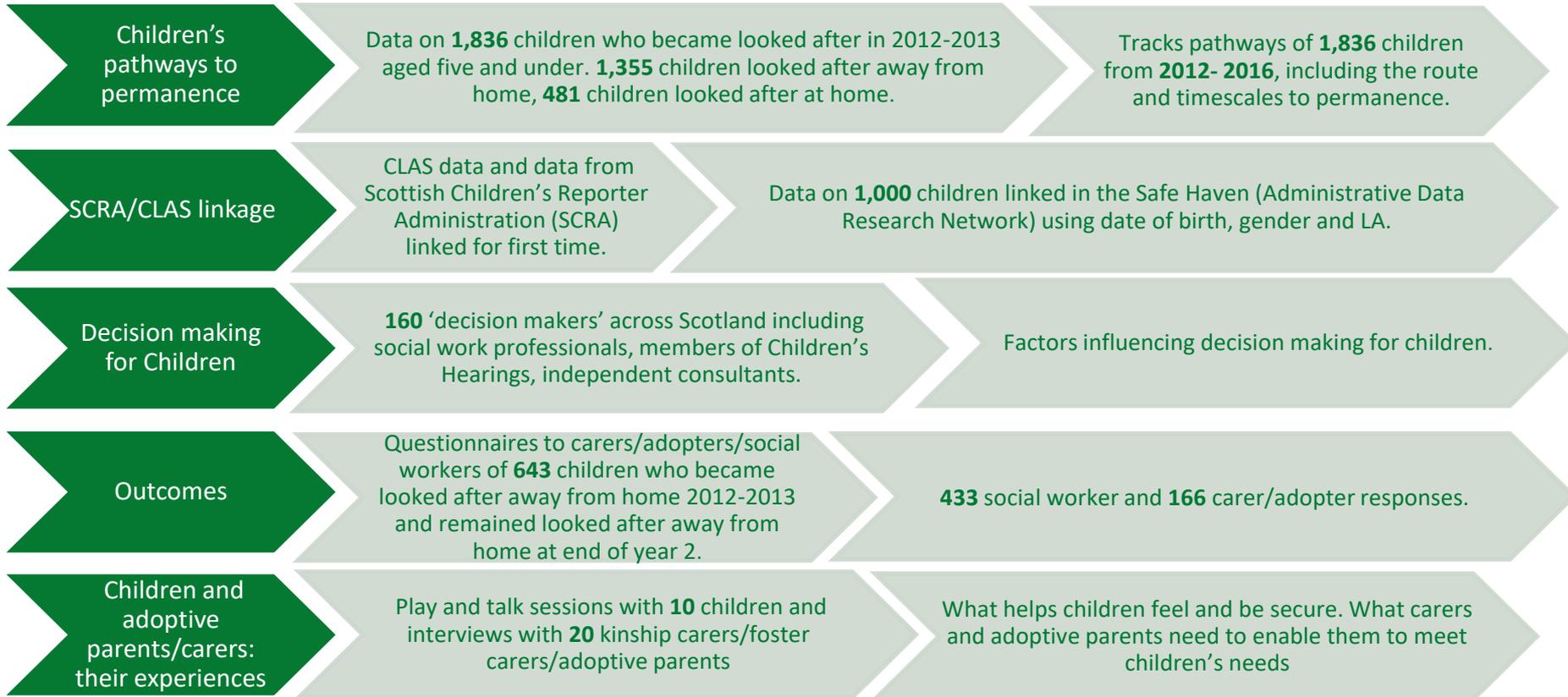


# Permanently Progressing? Building Secure Futures for Children in Scotland

- Permanently Progressing? Building Secure Futures for children in Scotland: a collaboration between the Universities of Stirling, York, and Lancaster, with Adoption and Fostering Alliance (AFA) Scotland.
- Phase One (2014-2018) designed to be the first part of a longitudinal study following a large cohort of children into adolescence and beyond
- Explores decision making, pathways, progress, and outcomes over four years for all children in Scotland who became looked after (at home or away from home) in 2012-2013 aged five and under.
- Draws on data from Children Looked After Statistics (CLAS), from Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) children, foster carers, kinship carers, adoptive parents, and professionals



# Overview of data



# Our 'cohort' of children





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## Becoming looked after away from home

# First away from home placement\*

- Nearly half of all children initially on Section 25 CH(S) A 1995
  - Most others initially on emergency or interim measures
- 60% of children were initially placed with unrelated foster carers
  - Higher for babies under 6 weeks old
- 35% of children initially placed with kinship foster carers
  - Around half of 4-5 year olds, but only 15% of babies under 6 weeks old

\*CLAS data, 1355 out of 1836



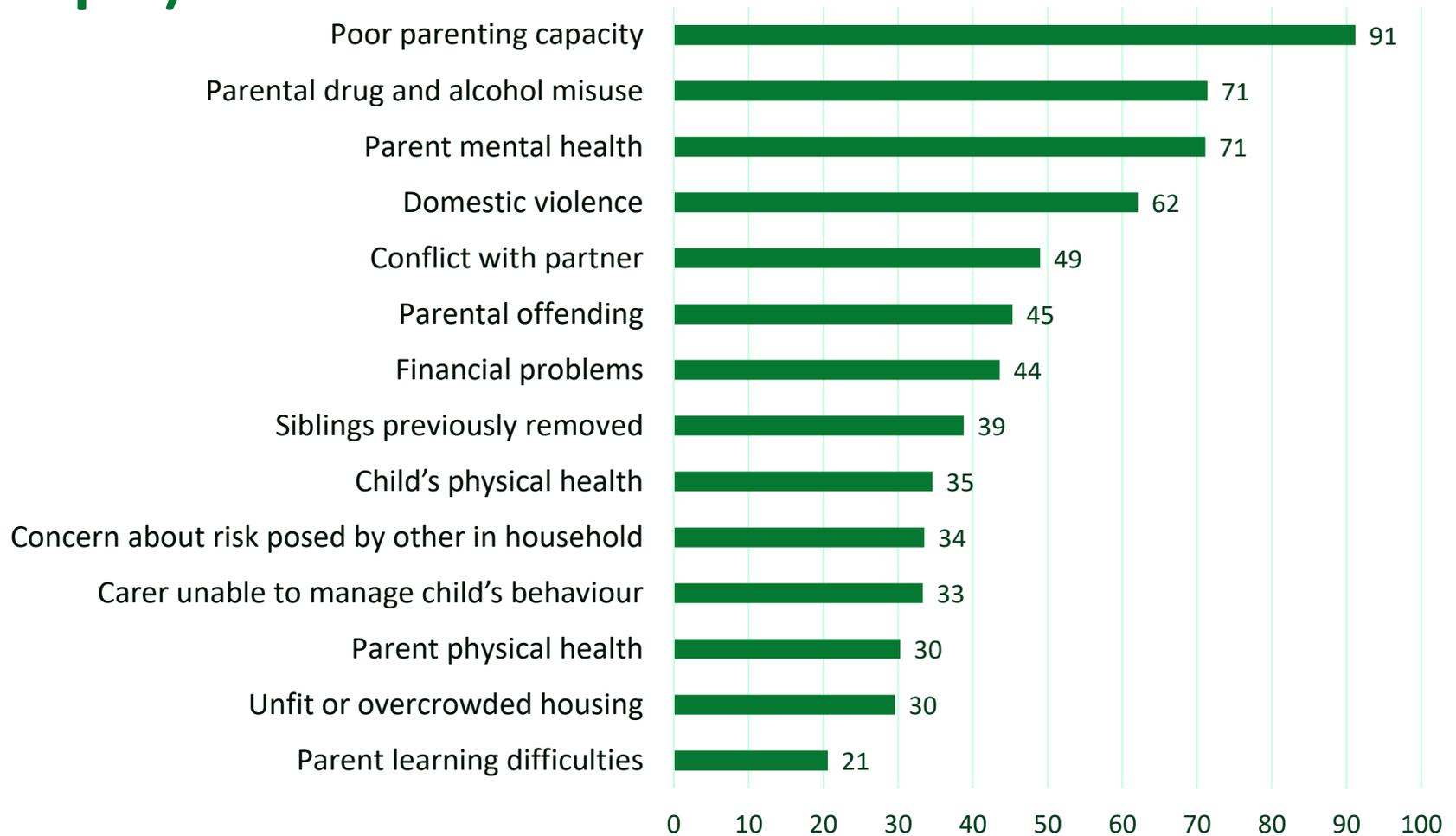
# Outcomes Sample\*: Children's experience of maltreatment

- For 9 out of 10 children there were concerns they had directly experienced abuse or neglect
  - 81% neglect
  - 65% emotional abuse
  - 27% physical abuse
  - 6% sexual abuse
- Around two-thirds of children experienced more than one type of maltreatment
- More children experienced higher severity neglect and emotional abuse than physical or sexual abuse

\***433** social worker and **166** carer/adopter responses



# Experience of family problems (% of Outcomes sample)



# Children\*: Why I became 'looked after away from home'

- Some children were able to remember and recall experiences of neglect and abuse
- Other children had been told by social workers and carers that their mummy/daddy could not keep them safe
- Some parents/carers uncertain of what to share and when

\*'Play and talk' sessions with 10 children and interviews with 20 carers/adoptive parents



# Why I became looked after away from home



Interviewer: *Is that why you were taken into foster care?*

Lewis: *Yeah, because they would fight and stuff.*

Interviewer: *Right, okay, shouting or hitting?*

Lewis: *Hitting and shouting. They would...my mum and dad here told me that they hid drugs in my socks.*

Interviewer: *In your socks? Gosh.*

Lewis: *And they drank lots of alcohol.*

Lewis\* (aged nine)

\* All names changed. Where we have used more than one quote from one child, we have used different names





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## The Child's Journey : Moving to Permanence

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# Moves\* and what these means for the child

- 25% of children looked after away from home had three or more placements
- 10% of children looked after away from home had four or more placements
- 1 in 5 children had two or more periods of being looked after away from home interspersed with period at home (including being looked after at home)
- 32% of children looked after away from home not in a permanent placement after 3-4 years

\*

CLAS data on 1355 children



# Moving to permanence:

- ‘Place-ability of child’: included child’s age and whether she/he had brothers and sisters; type and amount of ongoing contact with birth family, and uncertainty about long term health implications
- Resources
- Emotions involved in making difficult decisions
- Different ‘cultures’, for example where adoption is pathway the legal route varied geographically
- Focus on process – differed from child/ carer

\* Decision Making Strand: 160 ‘decision makers’ across Scotland



# Moving to permanence – carers

- Knowing child's day to day routines ('my bible' )
- Information about the child's needs to be carefully and fully explained
- Difficult boundary – claiming but child not necessarily 'legally secure'



# Children: memories of moving to permanent carers/adopters

- Varies according to level of transition and child's age
- Children shown photo albums with space for future
- Visits for lunch/tea
- Sleepovers
- Marked day with particular food
- Revisit 'memories'



# Timings



- Most children did not talk about legal processes – with one exception, Arran\*, who had this advice about the timescales involved in adoption:

*Arran: Something that they could improve...even though the legal time is a longer time they should try and make it as quick as they can.*

*Interviewer: Right, because for you it was over a year wasn't it? So would you have liked that to have been less time?*

*Arran: So you wouldn't have uncertainty that you wouldn't...*

*Interviewer: During that year did you think this might not happen?*

*Arran: No, I just thought that I'm not too sure how long it will take.*

\*All names changed



Interviewer: *Why do you think it took so long? Do you know?*

Arran : *Probably because they had to...I know why it took so long because my mum kept wanting to...she kept trying to keep me because she didn't want me to leave but my dad was fine with it. So she kept doing it and doing it but she wasn't...she couldn't look after us so...*

[Later in interview]

Interviewer: *So you were saying that if you were going to tell people about things that you wanted to change, it would be about the time it took to be adopted?*

Arran: *Yeah, and if you are going to get it happened to you, you don't want it to take as long as it did and you would not want it to take so long and then you're so unsure and stuff.*

*\*All names changed*





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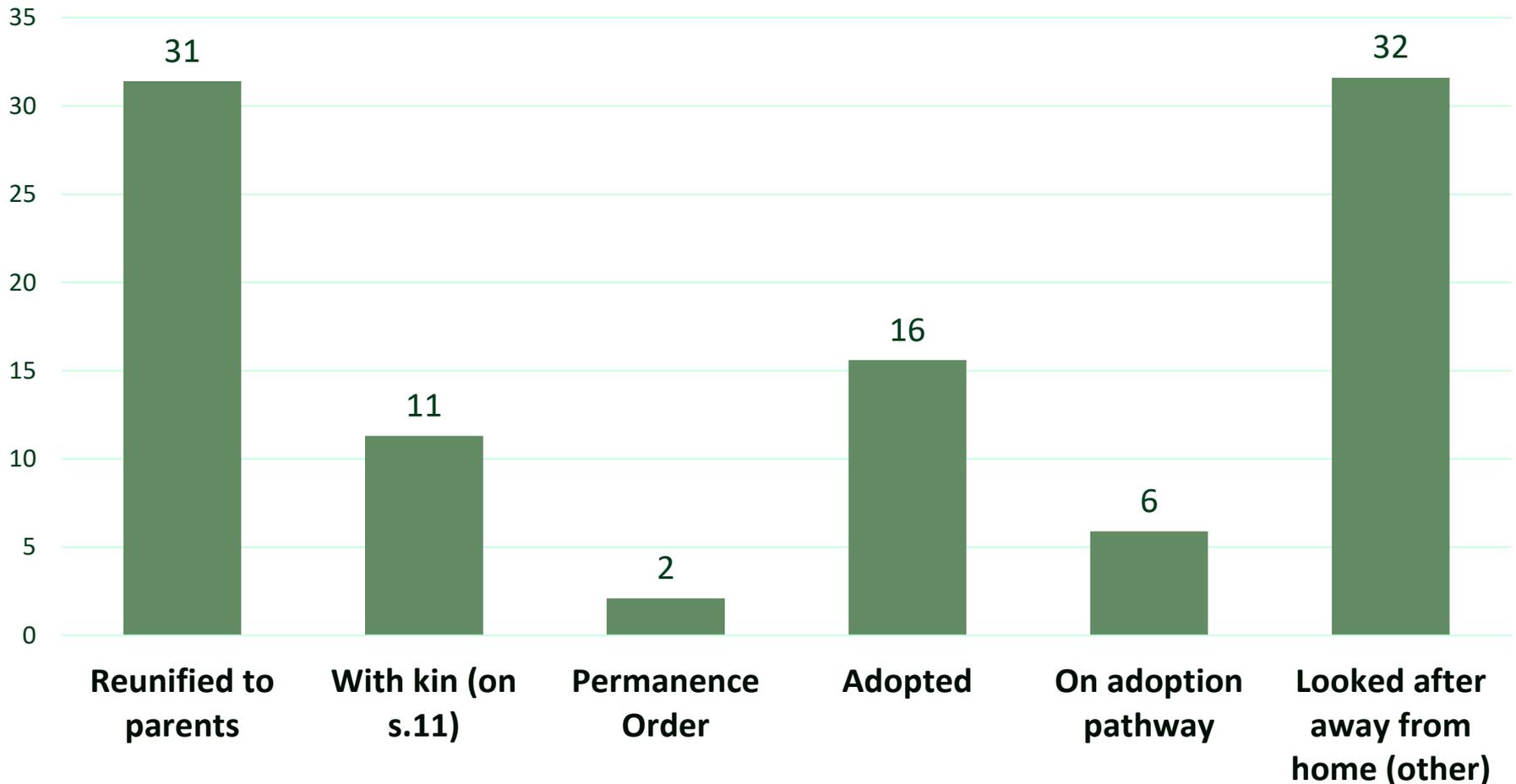


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The Child's Journey :  
Where are children  
and how are they doing

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# Where were the 1,355 children after 3-4 years? (%)



# Emotional and behavioural problems (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)\*

- Higher prevalence of difficulties
  - Where children had first been looked after away from home when they were older
  - Where children were older when they had entered the current placement
  - Where children had had 3 or more placement changes
  - For children with a disability
- No major differences between permanence groups

\***433** social worker and **166** carer/adopter responses



# Attachments and relationships\*

- Higher level of attachment concerns
  - Where children had first been looked after away from home when they were older
  - Where children had become looked after away from home more than once (failed reunification attempt or attempts)
  - Where children were older when they had entered the current placement

\*433 social worker and 166 carer/adopter responses





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Being and Feeling  
Secure:  
What helps

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# Being and feeling secure: From carers and adoptive parents

Attuned day-to-day reparative care including

- Demonstrations of love and kindness
- Communicative open-ness
- Understanding what might explain behaviours and telling others- including nursery and school
- Reliable routines - including around food/bedtime
- Being dependable (example of bus ticket)
- Health and developmental needs (speech therapy, dentist, optician)
- Accompanying children to activities where they might struggle
- Helping child to manage contact



# Children : Being and feeling secure

Relationships, routines, predictable future, and communicative open-ness (my words not theirs ! )

- Differences in care experienced through day-to-day routines and special occasions
- Not moving between carers
- Different limits (bedtime, toys, food)
- Going to school
- Reliable and predictable routine (where I sit, my 'jobs')
- Physical markers of future stability – wallpaper
- Photos and tangible reminders



# Being and Feeling Secure: Children identified differences between then and now



Interviewer: *Does it get harder the longer you're here? You know, the longer you stay here does it get harder to remember before?*

Rory\*: *Kind of but, like, I can remember lots of things but it's hard to remember some of it. I remember the Christmas I got my iPad and it was really, really...I loved it, I just loved it and then I had heaps of gun games and stuff. I had Grand Theft Auto.*

Interviewer: *You had Grand Theft Auto when you were three?*

Rory: *Yea.*

Interviewer: *And are you allowed that now?*

Rory: *No !*

\*All names changed



# Tangible ways of linking past and present: Jean's memory box



Interviewer: *What's in your memory box?*

Jean: *Pictures of my sister; cards that are very important to me; all my medals and trophies.*

Interviewer: *You keep it safe?*

Jean : *It's all my special stuff that I don't want anyone to touch. It stays in this one... Well, I had the box since I was three. It was when I used to go to this like, care place with my brother and my sister. That was the last time that I saw my sister.*

Interviewer: *Okay, so there's things in the box that help you remember?*

Jean: *Yes.*



# Tangible ways: Jean's memory box

Carer: *Who gave you that?*

Jean : *Roy and his mum and my mum, my real mum. I remember I had the box and then, I'm like, this would be good for putting memories in it, so I just kept the things in it. I remember I kept one of the sweets for my sister and then, it got all mouldy.*

Interviewer: *So you had to throw it out?*

Jean: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *Maybe when you look at the box, you'll still remember that the sweet was there.*

Jean: *It smells.*



# Being and feeling secure



Interviewer: *What made...what decided you to change from calling them Jane and John to calling them mum and dad?*

Aileen\*: *Because I knew that I was going to stick with them all the time.*

Interviewer: *Okay. How did you know?*

Aileen: *Because I knew that I wasn't going to be moving and heaps of time I was misbehaved.*

\*All names changed





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- Phase One reports on the website

Phase Two of study will see where the children are and how they are doing

**To sign up to receive information about the Permanently**

**Progressing study:**

**<http://eepurl.com/ducBOv>.**

**BE THE DIFFERENCE**