UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF NON-WHITE ETHNIC MINORITY CARE LEAVERS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED A PLACEMENT WITH A WHITE FOSTER FAMILY

By

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of DOCTOR OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Centre for Applied Psychology

School of Psychology

The University of Birmingham

October 2022

Overview

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Birmingham and contains three chapters. The first chapter is a meta-ethnographic review of the literature on the components important to belonging for people who have experienced being in care or adopted. The second chapter is a qualitative empirical study of the experiences of non-White care leavers who have experienced a placement with a family from a different race and/or ethnicity to them. The final chapter presents a 'press release' for both the literature review and the empirical research, which outline the main findings of the papers in a manner suitable for public dissemination.

Dedication

Firstly, I dedicate this thesis to my past, much younger self who failed his A levels, was told he would not amount to anything and did not have any idea who he was. Importantly, I thank him for finding the courage and desire to work incredibly hard and get to this position after 13 years. I also dedicate this thesis to my family, my mum, dad and brother. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my new wife Laura Slatter who has been a shining light through the darkest of times.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the participants who contributed to the empirical and literature review chapters of this thesis. To the individuals I met who chose to take part in this research, it has been a privilege to hear your stories. Collectively, you have all sparked a passion inside me. I do not intend for this research to sit on a shelf at a university library, I hope to continue to advocate for those in care, and with permission, find platforms to share these stories.

A huge thank you to my supervisors Kate Woodcock and Faiza Nasir. Kate, your willingness to take on my project and always find space to support me was extremely valuable. It has been a privilege to be a part of the Kate Woodcock Research Group and learn from the range of students you supervise. I certainly could not have done this without you. Faiza, you were the first supervisor to listen to my proposal and you started the spark which gave me hope to carry it on. You both watched as my initial project fell through and still believed in me, I am grateful for your continued support.

Thank you to all the individuals that have supported my journey up until now, specifically to Andy Fox, Fay Julal Cnossen, Marie Kershaw, Saira-Jayne, Lesley Anderson-Brown and Elizabeth Kent. I realise this project has been an addition to the already high demands you all face and so I want to thank you for your expertise, time and patience and willingness for this project to succeed.

To my trainee family, there are no words that can describe what you mean to me. So, I will leave it at the phrase I have used to describe you, my family. There is one person I could not have done this without and that is Suchi, we have become close friends over the last year and I now classify you as the best library buddy a person can have. Together I feel we had

the best mix, moments of serious knuckling down with the work peppered with deep philosophical conversations which sometimes served to procrastinate, but we were on to this trap… sometimes… Your friendship has meant a lot to me so thank you.

To my mum, dad and Amrit, I couldn't have done this without you, you have pushed me to be the best I can and encouraged me to take a step back when things are overwhelming. To Alexa, your support has been invaluable and so the least I could do is give you a shoutout! Finally, to my new wife Laura, you have been there in this rollercoaster of a ride from day 1 of my journey to now. You have celebrated my successes and held me when times have been tough. Importantly, although I struggle to see the best in myself you have always believed in me, I am always grateful to have you in my life.

Finally, to Spotify and more specifically 'focus flow'. Your 'up-tempo instrumental hip hop beats' has truly got me through hours of work and helped me to get to the end of writing this thesis. Whoever made this playlist, you are a legend!

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Chapter 1 Meta-ethnography: A meta-ethnography on the components important to belonging for people who have experienced being in care or adopted

1.1 Abstract

Background: The desire to belong is important for all human beings, achieving a sense of belonging is often difficult for those in substitute care. There are no reviews, certainly no meta-ethnographies that bring together the experiences of belonging for those in substitute care in the UK. Therefore, this synthesis aims to identify the shared components of belonging important for those in substitute care to produce novel interpretations.

Method: A systematic literature search was conducted in five databases which identified thirteen UK-based qualitative papers from peer reviewed journals. The papers were appraised for their methodological quality using the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) quality framework. Findings from the papers were synthesised using Noblit & Hare's (1988) meta-ethnographic approach.

Results: Three themes and three subthemes were identified that captured the shared experiences of those in substitute care. A felt membership to a family is accessed through involvement with substitute family practices/rituals, family language/labels and the importance of negotiating transitions. Additional factors included managing stigma and difference and availability of care experienced stories/memories.

Conclusion: The findings highlighted that both adopted and fostered children go through a similar process to access a sense of belonging. Overall, the findings suggest that belonging begins from transitioning into a new family. This continues through everyday attempts from carers and professionals to integrate and strengthen the individual's presence in the family and surrounding system. Importantly, the findings explore the processes taken to navigate connections to birth family and the stigma related to care status.

2. Background

2.1 Belonging

The desire to belong is important for all human beings and has a significant impact on overall wellbeing, including lifetime resilience, life satisfaction and physical health (Bowlby, 1988; Brendtro & Brokenleg, 2002; Ungar, 2005a; Allen & Bowles 2012). However, defining belonging can be a difficult task as it changes depending on the person and cultural context (Cartmell & Bond 2015).

Multicultural studies demonstrate that expression of one's own identity, being listened to and being recognised as an integral part of the community are important drivers of a sense of belonging (Ameli & Merali 2004, Buonfino & Thomson 2007; Sporton & Valentine 2007; Mulgan, 2009). Therefore, in many ways establishing a sense of belonging is intertwined with the complex process of identity construction, encompassing nationality, gender and ethnicity etc. (Bhimji (2008), 414). As Epstein (1993) states:

'it is by drawing boundaries and placing others outside those boundaries that we establish our identities', and thus where we feel we belong (p. 18)

In recognition of the close links between social identity and belonging, here we define belonging as:

'a perceived social support, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experiences of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group or others' (Strayhorn, 2012, pp. 3).

2.2 Belonging in a substitute family

Bowlby's Attachment Theory considers the need for belonging as fundamental to emotional wellbeing, emphasising the importance of the parent-child relationship (Bowlby 1969). Belonging in itself is often an unconscious part of everyday life, and only considered when it is not felt (Bennett, 2014). The consequences of not belonging can lead to a sense of isolation, alienation and displacement (Dorling et al., 2008; Hooks, 2009). Achieving a sense of belonging is often difficult for 'looked after' or adopted people living in substitute families. People in substitute families can experience several placement changes which can lead to experiences of family loss, loss of geographical roots and friendship networks, all of which are important

for belonging (Barn, 2010). Furthermore, placement changes can sometimes be hurried, particularly following previous placement breakdown, leaving little opportunity for consultation and planning (Sinclair et al., 2005). Such transitions can expose "*already damaged*" children to repeated levels of distress and disconnection, impacting their ability to form relationships and further negatively impact a child's sense of belonging and capacities that could support a robust sense of belonging in the future (Unrau, Seita & Putney, 2008). Even when a young person is placed with a family and experiences a sense of belonging, this is often at the expense of having to not only understand, but also fully integrate with new family practices, which may potentially be at odds with previously held beliefs and values (Luckow, 2020). These individuals must navigate new friendships, a new school and a new community all whilst attempting to live an 'ordinary' childhood (Children's Commissioner for England, 2019)

Children in substitute care are often forced into attempting to navigate belonging to a substitute family as well as their birth family (Ostler, 2013). However, an outcome from the care experience is that they do not experience a sense of belonging in either family. Alternatively, those in care can retain loyalties to their birth family and only have a superficial sense of belonging with their new family (Juffer, 2006; Wrobel & Dillon, 2009; Biehal et al., 2010). Understanding this, social services in the United Kingdom (UK) try to facilitate meetings with both the birth family and foster/adoptive family. However, an understanding of the mechanisms involved in supporting belonging is still limited. Understanding how a sense of belonging is constituted and the complex processes that children in substitute families[1] need to navigate in order to experience a sense of belonging is critical. Importantly, it can help to design and implement strategies that will appropriately support these young people. A key dimension of this necessary understanding, indeed perhaps the most important element, is the perspective of young people themselves (Bromley et al., 2020)

Prior research examining the perspectives of young people in care has recognised that children in substitute care experience a sense of belonging in settings where they feel at home, they are shown love and acceptance, and are recognised as a member of the family (Griffin, 2004;

[1] The term Looked after child or 'LAC' in particular is problematic given the connotations of being a deficit or to 'lack' (TACT, 2019). Instead, there is a shift towards children in care (CIC) as an alternative. Therefore, young people 'looked after' will now be referred to as 'CIC'. When speaking jointly about adoption and CIC, they will be referred to as people in substitute families.

Bengtsson & Luckow, 2020). However, being necessarily qualitative in nature, the research that has explored this phenomenon examines small, very specific populations of foster/adoptive youth, which are limited in their transferability. Many of these studies are also from outside the UK (e.g. Australia/Denmark), limiting applicability to the UK substitute care context.

One way to overcome the inherent limitations of qualitative research with small samples tailored to in-depth understanding of a phenomenon of interest, is with a literature review. Specifically, a meta-ethnography is a form of evidence synthesis that goes beyond providing a narrative account of the literature. Through systematic comparison of findings across several qualitative studies, a meta-ethnography allows new interpretations to be derived, which considers all of the available data (Paterson, 2011). Thus, overcoming the limits posed by constrained samples, which are often selected for their bespoke characteristics (Paterson et al., 2001; Levack, 2012).

There are no current reviews, and certainly no meta-ethnographies that bring together the shared experiences of people with experience in substitute families in the UK and their relationship to belonging. The present study serves to be the first such review in this area.

2.3 Aims

The current review seeks to explore belonging for young people who are currently experiencing or have recently experienced being in care in the UK. Through examination of these different experiences, this meta-ethnography aims to produce new interpretations of the research to understand the overall shared experiences amongst this group.

3. Method

3.1 Epistemological position

The author adopts a critical realist stance. This position acknowledges the complex understanding of experience is in itself "unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009: pp 24). Therefore, statements made by participants will reflect their own perceptions, components important to belonging will be presented as guidelines rather than rules for all living in a substitute family (Danermark et al., 2002).

3.2 Noblit and Hare's (1998) meta-ethnographic method

In 1998, Noblit and Hare developed a method of synthesising qualitative research. The meta-ethnographic approach seeks to critically examine several accounts of an event/situation and draw cross-case conclusions. They shared a systematic process through seven phases, noted in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1. - The seven guiding phases of conducting a meta-ethnography by Noblit and Hare (1988: pp. 110-112)

Phase	Outcome
Phase I *- Getting started*	This involves identifying an interest informed by qualitative research. The task is to read interpretative accounts in the literature.
Phase II *- Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest*	This involves deciding what studies are of relevant interest for both the target audience and the researcher and then accessing them.
Phase III *- Reading the studies*	This phase requires repeated reading of accounts in the studies found and noting what the studies have reported.
Phase IV *- Determining how the studies are related*	The chosen studies must then be 'put together' through determining relationships between studies. Making use of key metaphors, ideas, phrases of concepts and placing them next to each other. Assumptions about the studies can start to be developed.
Phase V *- Translating the studies into another*	This involves comparisons of metaphors and interpretations across the studies, while maintaining the central metaphors or concepts that are found within each of the studies.
Phase VI *- Synthesizing translations*	When there are enough studies and translations between studies this phase involves understanding whether translations can incorporate each other or if they create competing translations.
Phase VII *- Expressing the synthesis*	This involves interpreting the information in an appropriate way that tends to the audience.

3.3 Phase I - Deciding on a participant group

The review subject developed from a general interest in children in care (CIC). The author conducted their empirical research on non-White care leavers and was interested in components of belonging in care more generally. In searching the literature, it was found that the majority of research was developed outside of the UK e.g. Denmark/Australia. Whilst there can be an argument for a more generic focus on human belonging, the experiences of Aboriginal CIC in Australia would have their own unique experiences, defined by that particular context and history. Therefore, findings may not directly translate into UK policies and care experiences.

The focus moved towards the experiences of belonging for CIC and care leavers in the UK. The addition of care leavers was because young people are expected to make transitions out of care earlier than most, often with little assurances of falling back on their family (Jones, 1995). This can continue to impact their sense of belonging and isolation.

However, due to a limited amount of qualitative research focusing on CIC's experiences of belonging, the scope of the literature review was opened to UK adoption studies. This was in consideration of the parallels that they may experience. This included being separated from their birth families, to developing relationships with new family systems. With this change comes new friendships, new school and a new community. Therefore, the demographic was changed to include CIC, care leavers and adoption accounts.

3.4 Phase II – A systematic literature search

Phase two of Noblit and Hare's (1998) approach involved systematically accessing the research papers related to the research question. Below is the process followed.

Search strategy

At this stage librarians, specialists in social work at the University and clinicians in CIC and adoption services were sought for advice on the search terms used and relevant databases.

Meetings also included discussions around the databases demands. For example, truncation of terms (donated by an *) and connectors (AND, OR, NOT) through free-text search terms and database specific thesaurus terms (i.e. selecting relevant qualitative limiters and/or filters on the databases) (Booth, 2016; Shaw et al., 2004). The terms can be found in table 1.2.

TABLE 1.2. – SEARCH TERMS

KEY WORDS	Search terms derived from key words
FOSTER CHILD	Child* in care OR Child* in foster care OR child* out of home care OR child* in substitute care OR Foster care child* OR Care experience child* OR Adopted OR Looked after child* OR Foster youth OR Youth in care OR Youth in foster care OR youth out of home care OR youth in substitute care OR Foster care youth OR Care experience youth OR Looked after youth OR Foster adolescent OR Adolescent in care OR Adolescent in foster care OR adolescent out of home care OR adolescent in substitute care OR Foster care adolescent OR Care experience adolescent OR Looked after adolescent
BELONG*	Fit* in OR Connect* OR Closeness OR related* OR feeling accepted OR feelings of acceptance OR perceived acceptance OR feeling respected OR feelings of respect OR perceived respect
QUALITATIVE	Interview* OR Focus group* OR Ethnograph*

A total of five databases were searched: Psychinfo and Medline (using the OVID platform), Web of science, Proquest and EBSCO. Search engines such as google scholar were also used as it can 'form a powerful addition to traditional search methods' (Haddaway et al., 2015). Further searching was not conducted due to limited resources and that there were enough papers to obtain high information power on belonging in CIC (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2016). The results from all databases were then exported to a reference managing programme, Endnote.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The screening process began by first excluding duplicated papers, followed by the screening of titles and abstracts on the inclusion criteria outlined in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3. Inclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Rationale
People who have experienced being in foster care or adoption either because they are currently in foster care/adoption or have previously been in foster care/adopted.	By also including those who have left care, the review can identify the impact of their care experience on their sense of belonging as care leavers.
Exploring concepts of belonging, connectedness, relationships across settings	Based on the definition of belonging in this review, connectedness and relationship are also important in informing our understanding.
Includes open ended data analysed using qualitative methods. mixed method papers are also included as long as paper has substantial qualitative section	This is important in answering the research question and accessing the lived experiences of participants in their experiences of belonging.
Papers that have a UK-based participant group	This follows the notion that care experiences are specific to policy and cultural demands that are specific to each child. In order to inform UK practice it felt important to review -UK based papers and those experiencing domestic care.
English language written papers	There are no available resources to translate papers. Additionally, non-English written papers are indicative of research conducted abroad which is automatically excluded.

Involvement of additional reviewers

In qualitative evidence synthesis there may be bias in researchers' assumptions and input (Hannes, 2011). Soilemezi and Linceviciute (2018) suggested to involve at least two reviewers at all stages with previous reviewing experience. They argue that 'synergetic reviewing' and synthesising will bring different perspectives, assist with transparency and minimise bias, adding richness to the findings. Keeping an audit trail of decisions and disagreements, and using clear inclusion criteria for each stage can help to minimise bias (Soilemezi, & Linceviciute, 2018). Additionally, research by Stoll et al. (2019) found that a second reviewer added 6.6%-9.1% additional eligible studies at title/abstract phases of review and an additional 6.6%-11.9% of studies at full text.

Therefore, the current review involved three undergraduate interns who were available on a placement year between their penultimate and final year of undergraduate studies, and with experience in conducting reviews. The papers were double screened based on inclusion and

exclusion criteria. Through regular meetings, they were guided at each stage from title screening to finalising papers by the lead researcher who also received support by their supervisor. An example of the team's discussions and disagreements are presented in appendix 1A.

Researcher bias

The lead researcher was a birth child of a foster family for 12 years and was at the time of reviewing a trainee clinical psychologist working clinically at a looked after child service. Their empirical paper is on the experiences of non-White ethnic minority care leavers and so there is an invested interest in the experiences of CIC. On the other hand, the three research interns were on a placement year between the penultimate and final year of their Psychology undergraduate studies. They had some experience of conducting reviews but had no experience with people in substitute families. Therefore, the work started with initially sharing the definitions of those in substitute families and rationale for the inclusion and exclusion criteria. There were regular meetings at the beginning of the review process and check-ins between meetings. Both the lead researcher and interns were supervised by a lecturer at the University of Birmingham who had experience of supervising trainee clinical psychologists and other postgraduate students in meta-ethnographic reviews. The supervisor has some experience with supporting research on CIC.

The sifting procedure designed to minimise researcher bias

All reviewers individually went through the papers at each stage of the reviewing process. The reviewers then came together virtually to discuss each paper. They explored their reasons for including/excluding and then sought to reach a majority agreement (e.g. when 3/4 reviewers agreed). Although there were no situations where there wasn't a majority agreement, it is important to highlight the power and influence of the lead researcher on decision making. This power imbalance was reflected on live in the meetings and the lead researcher themselves explored this in their own reflective journal and in supervision.

Reviewing the records at title level

All reviewers individually went through all 1149 titles and screened based on the inclusion criteria. After reviewing, the lead researcher included 74 papers, the interns all included the

papers the lead researcher included but also including an additional 21 papers for abstract level.

Reviewing the records at abstract level

All reviewers read the remaining 95 abstracts and screened based on inclusion criteria. The interns excluded 9 papers that the lead researcher included for full title level. These inconsistencies were discussed as a group and explored. Reasons for exclusion included the interns not picking up on terminology discussed in the papers e.g. CIC abbreviated as children in care (4 papers). Additionally, some were non-UK based papers and demonstrated in the abstract with the use of the 'dollar' when speaking about money, or the publishing university being from another country (5 papers). Of these 5 papers, the researcher included 3 as he had missed these key indicators of non-UK based papers. Therefore, they were also removed.

Reviewing the records at full paper level

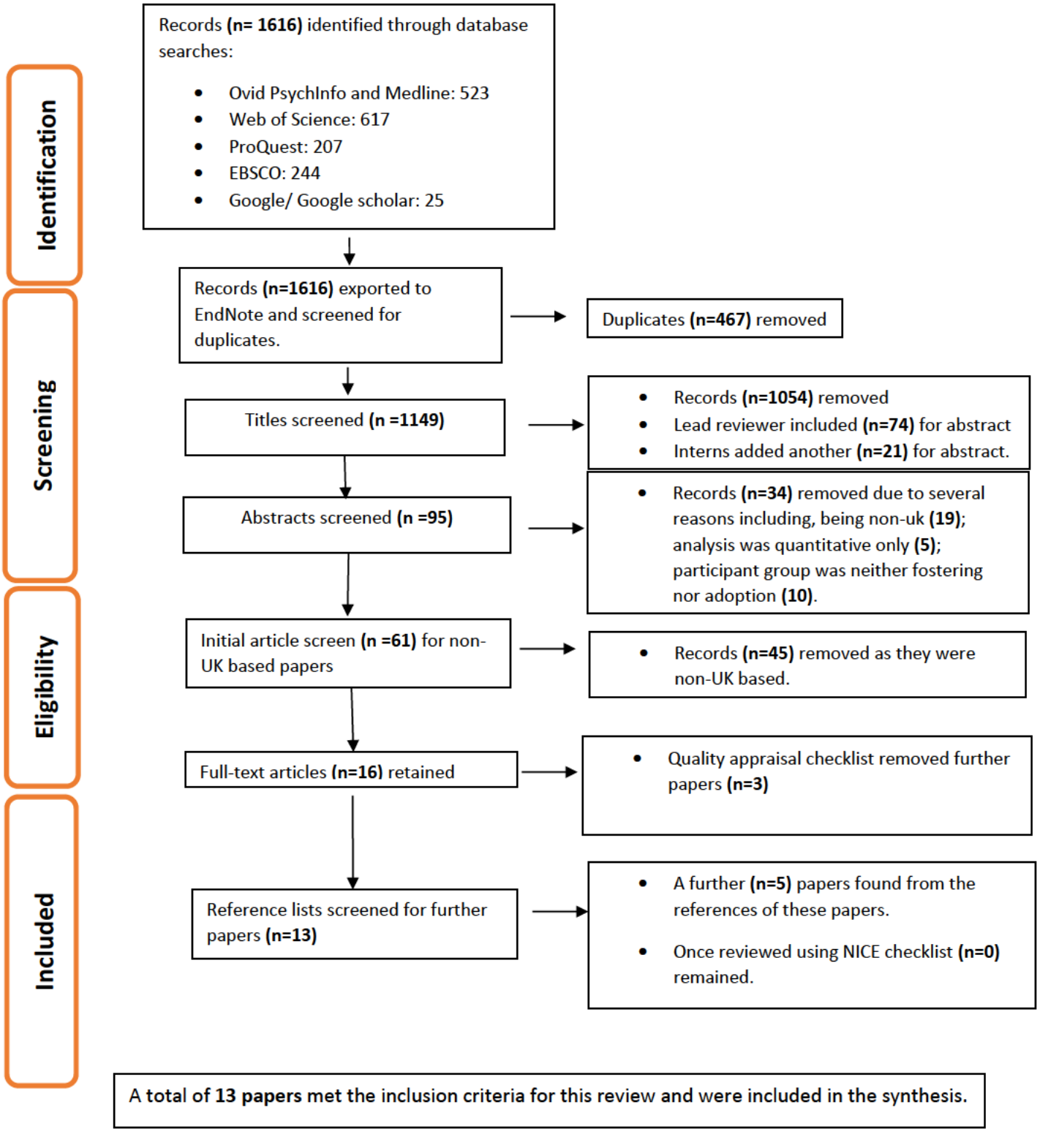
As not all papers had shared their population sample in their title or abstract, it was important in the next phase for reviewers to review the sample section of the full paper to exclude non-UK based papers. All reviewers each went through the remaining 61 papers and collectively agreed on removing 45 papers – leaving 16 papers. After reviewing these papers, 13 remained.

Booth (2016) suggested the importance of searching the references of the included full papers as a standard of good practice. In reviewing the 13 papers a total of 5 additional papers were found and analysed by all researchers using a quality framework. All papers were inappropriate for the review. Issues for exclusion included non-UK based participants (n=4) and participants not reflecting of CIC and mainly focused on adoptive parents/birth children's perspectives (n=1).

Systematic Screening Process

Using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-ethnography (PRISMA) model (Moher, Tetzlaff & Atman, 2009) in Figure 1.1, the selection process is outlined, highlighting the total number of papers and the stage at which papers were included or excluded.

Figure 1: PRISMA flowchart of study selection process



A total of 13 papers remained and are listed in table 1.4.

Table 1.4 – Details of empirical papers included for the review

Research paper and author	Research aim	Epistemology	Analytic tool?	Where is the researcher in relation to the data (role)?	Demographic information
Boddy (2019). (Care leavers)	To examine what is understood by "family" for CIC	Not stated	Thematic case-based approach	Role of researcher(s) is not clearly defined.	**Number of Participants** - 6 **Gender** – Unknown. **Age** – 16-32 **Ethnicity** – Unknown
Dance & Rushton (2005) (Children currently in care)	To further understanding on late permanent placements for young people, including experience of joining a new family.	Not stated	Not stated.	States an understanding of the researchers' 'unequal power relationships.' Unclear how researchers managed this.	**Number of Participants** - 29 **Gender** – 18 females and 11 males. **Age** - unknown **Ethnicity** – White British (n=25); Remaining 4 unknown
Greenwood, & Kelly (2020). (Children currently in care)	Experiences of belonging for CIC in an atypical school transition	Not stated	Not stated	Expertise of researcher clearly discussed. Discussion of power differences.	**Number of Participants** - 6 **Gender** – 1 female and 5 males. **Age** – 8-10 years **Ethnicity** – Unknown
Rogers (2017)	To explore how the CIC in this study experience	Not stated	Thematic analysis	Discussion of power differences – use of anti-oppressive participatory	**Number of Participants** - 10 **Gender** – 5 females and 5 males.

(Children currently in care)	and manage stigma in their day-to-day lives.			approach to the research and helped to minimise power relations.	**Age** – 12-14 years **Ethnicity** – White British (n=8); White British and Caribbean dual heritage (n=2)
Rostill-Brookes et al. (2011). (Children currently in care)	To understand the reasons behind high levels of placement breakdown and provide recommendations.	Critical realist	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis	Researcher roles discussed but not how this impacts on participants	**Number of Participants** - 5 **Gender** – 2 females and 3 males. **Age** – 9-15 years **Ethnicity** – White British (n=3); Dual heritage (n=2)
Ward (2011) (Children currently in care)	Understanding factors that may act as barriers for care leavers identity formation and perceptions of self-continuity. Helping to improve a smooth transition.	Not stated	Grounded theory (after contacting author)	Role of researcher(s) is not clearly defined.	**Number of Participants** - 49 **Gender** – Unknown. **Age** – unknown – states children and young people **Ethnicity** – Unknown
Schofield (2002). (Care leavers)	To understand the processes for CIC to experience foster family membership.	Not stated	Not stated	Role of researcher(s) is not clearly defined.	**Number of Participants** - 40 **Gender** – 30 females and 10 males. **Age** – 18-30 years

					Ethnicity – White British (n=32); Minority ethnic origin – specifics unknown (n=8)
Neil (2012) (Adopted young people)	Understanding how children make sense of their adopted status including experience being part of their adoptive family and connections to their birth family.	Not stated	Not stated	Role of researcher(s) is not clearly defined.	**Number of Participants** - 43 **Gender** – 18 females and 25 males. **Age** – 5-13 years (Mean= 8.6; SD = 1.9) **Ethnicity** – Unknown
Richards (2018). (Adopted young people)	How the complexities of belonging are managed, displayed, and performed by adoptive families		Thematic analysis (After contacting the author)	Role of researcher(s) is not clearly defined.	**Number of Participants** - 11 **Gender** – 11 females. **Age** – 5-12 years **Ethnicity** – Chinese (n=11)
Barn (2010) (Care leavers)	To explore the impact of ethnicity upon social exclusion experienced by care leavers.	Not stated	Thematic analysis -	Role of researcher(s) is not clearly defined.	**Number of Participants** - 36 **Gender** – 20 females and 16 males. **Age** – Unknown **Ethnicity** – African-Caribbean (n= 11), African (n= 8), Asian (n= 3), mixed parentage (n= 10), and White (n= 4).

MacDonald et al. (2021) **(Care leavers)**	To identify the active ingredients of lasting relationships, and what worked well to create the conditions in which CIC could thrive.	Not stated	Not stated	Role of researcher(s) is not clearly defined.	**Number of Participants** - 12 **Gender** – Unknown. **Age** – Unknown – states adults **Ethnicity** – Unknown
Jones et al. (2020) (Children currently in care)	How being a CIC may negatively impact their sense of belonging in the context of their schooling.	Not stated	Iterative thematic analysis	Expertise and background of researchers clear. Unclear of their impact on the research.	**Number of Participants** - 11 **Gender** – 2 females and 9 males. **Age** – 11-18 years **Ethnicity** – Unknown
Biehal (2014) (Children currently in care)	A qualitative analysis of foster children's experiences of belonging in a long-term foster family	Not stated	Narrative analysis	Role of researcher(s) is not clearly defined.	**Number of Participants** - 13 **Gender** – 5 females and 8 males. **Age** – 9-17 years **Ethnicity** – All White

Demographics of included studies

All thirteen studies were conducted in the UK. A total of 6 papers explored children currently in care, a further 5 papers included care leavers and 2 papers explored participants who are adopted.

The sample size varied, with the biggest sample being 49 (Ward, 2011) and the smallest being five (Rostill-Brookes et al., 2011). Overall, the sample sizes were above average of what would be expected for qualitative research, the total number of participants included for the review was 271, a total of 82 of those were care leavers, 54 participants were adopted, the remaining 135 participants were CIC.

Only a few studies provided details of the ethnic composition of their samples (Dance & Rushton, 2005 (n=25 plus 4 unknown); Rogers, 2017 (n=10); Rostill-Brookes, et al., 2011 (n=5); Schofield, 2002 (n=40); Richards, 2018 (n=11); Barn, 2010 (n=36); Biehal, 2014 (n=13)). A total of 127 participants ethnicities were defined. This included 85 White British, 25 described themselves as dual heritage (11 - African-Caribbean; 2- White British and Caribbean, 12 – unknown), Chinese (n=11), African (n=8), Asian (n=3), and "minority ethnic" but specific ethnicity unknown (n=8) (Schofield, 2002). Of those studies that presented ethnic composition, the majority of responses were from White British participants.

In relation to gender all but four papers shared the gender of their participants (Boddy, 2019; Ward, 2011; Barn, 2010; MacDonald et al., 2021). A total of 112 were female and 92 were male. The methods of analysis fell into two main categories: thematic analysis (n=5), Interpretative Phenomenological analysis (n=1), narrative analysis (n=1), grounded theory (n=1) and not stated (n=5).

All but one of the journal research authors failed to consider the impact of their role on the analysis.

Quality Appraisal

A critical appraisal tool was necessary to assess the included studies. Specifically, focusing on their methodological limitations and from that the authors interpretations and conclusions (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019). These limitations can then form the basis of further discussion and assessment of the data (Campbell et al., 2012).

Importantly, if the quality of the research is to a good enough standard, the voices of the participants in the review papers will be more credible and valuable. Therefore, the papers in this review were measured against the NICE qualitative quality appraisal checklist (NICE, 2012; Appendix 1B). Considering the research question, adaptations were made to the checklist, including determining whether the authors used a suitable qualitative method for the research and if they had a clear understanding of belonging/connection. Additionally, whether the data had a good representation of CIC's experiences. As a research group this was decided as representing at least 50% of participant quotes.

All thirteen papers were read and marked with a (✓) if the criterion was met, a (?) if it was not clear or the criterion was partially met, and an (X) if the criteria was clearly not met. Based on this, an overall assessment was made on the quality of the papers judged on how many of the criteria were or were not met. A final score of 'plus plus' or 'plus' or 'minus' was given. 'plus plus' scores were provided when most ($\geq 10/14$) of the checklist criteria had been fulfilled (a score of '✓' or '?'). A score of 'plus' was given when (6-9/14) of the criteria had been fulfilled. Finally, a 'minus' score was provided when few or no checklist criteria ($\leq 5/14$) had been fulfilled. Due to the limited research in this area, papers were only excluded if they received a 'minus' score. The results can be found in Table 1.5.

Additionally, to improve the reliability of the quality assessment, the lead researcher reviewed all papers and three interns reviewed around 4 papers each using the NICE quality appraisal checklist. The results were then compared and contrasted (Appendix 1C). A total of 6 papers incurred disagreements with the final score, the differences were between scoring a 'plus plus' or a 'plus', none of the papers were scored as a 'minus' by any of the reviewers. This was mainly related to data richness and the papers exploration of belonging. As papers were only excluded if they scored as a 'minus', all papers were included in the final review.

Table 1.5 – Overview of quality reviews for studies included for synthesis

Study	Theoretical approach			Study design	Data collection	Validity				Analysis							Ethics	Overall Methodological Quality
✓ ? ✘	Is the qualitative approach appropriate?	Is the study clear in what it seeks to do?	Is the qualitative method/analytic tool appropriate for the aim?	How defensible/rigorous is the research design/methodology?	How well was the data collection carried out?	Is the role of the researcher clearly described?	Is the context clearly described?	Were the methods reliable?	Is there a clear understanding by the researcher of belonging/connection?	Is the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Is the data rich?	Is the data a good representation of children in care' s experiences?	Is the analysis reliable?	Are the findings convincing?	Are the findings relevant to the aims of the study?	Are the conclusions adequate?	How clear and coherent is the reporting of ethics?	
Boddy (2019).	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✘	✘	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✘	Plus Plus
Dance & Rushton, (2005)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✘	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✘	Plus, plus
Greenwood & Kelly (2020)	✓	?	?	?	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✘	✓	?	?	?	?	✓	✘	Plus plus
Rogers (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✘	✓	✓	✘	✓	✓	✓	✘	✓	✓	?	✘	Plus Plus
Rostill-Brookes, Larkin, Toms &	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✘	Plus, Plus

Churchman (2011)																		
Ward (2011)	✓	✓	?	?	✓	✗	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	Plus Plus
Schofield (2002)	✓	?	?	?	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	?	✗	Plus
Neil (2012)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	Plus Plus
Richards (2018)	✓	✓	?	✗	✗	✗	✗	?	✓	?	?	?	✗	✓	✓	?	✗	Plus, plus
Barn (2010)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Plus Plus
MacDonald, & Marshall (2021).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	?	?	✗	✓	✓	?	?	✓	✓	✓	Plus Plus
Jones, Dean, Dunhill, Hope & Shaw (2020).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Plus Plus
Biehal (2014)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Plus Plus

*** Studies have been graded as follows: ++ All of most ($\geq 10/14$) of the checklist criteria have been fulfilled where they have not been fulfilled the conclusions are very unlikely to alter.**
+ Some of the checklist (6-9/14) criteria have been fulfilled, where they have not been fulfilled, or not adequately described, the conclusions are unlikely to alter.
- Few or no checklist ($\leq 5/14$) have been fulfilled and the conclusions are likely or very likely to alter.

Overall, the quality review suggested that thirteen papers were of very good quality, a remaining one was of good quality (Schofield, 2002). The studies appeared to have weaknesses in similar areas, including exploring the role of the researcher (which impaired the overall validity of those papers) and clarifying ethical considerations (some stated they had simply received ethical approval from an ethics board, whilst some did not mention ethics at all). Additionally, not all papers reported their data analysis and for some the method was only found out after the lead researcher contacted the authors (e.g. Ward, 2011; Richards, 2018).

3.5 Phase III - Reading the studies

The remaining phases were completed by the lead researcher with support from their supervisor. The lead researcher also discussed the following phases with a peer.

To begin data extraction, phase three "reading the studies" needed to be completed and the relevant information obtained. Therefore, all thirteen papers were read with particular emphasis on extracting from the results section of papers which held the themes and subthemes identified by the authors. All themes and subthemes were then placed in an extraction grid to begin analysis (see Appendix 1D).

3.6 Phase IV - Determining how the studies are related

Using the extraction grid in appendix 1D this starting the process for phase four '*Determining how the studies are related.*' As it was not always clear what some themes were discussing, below each theme was a short outline of what the papers actually said about each theme and the current authors interpretations of each theme. For example, the theme "Absence of social capital" from Ravinder Barn's (2010) paper on care leavers would be difficult to translate by itself. However, when combined with the authors discussions (e.g. Leaving care the majority of the young people had very little or no contact with their birth family) it became easier to find links with other papers. From here, each theme was printed, cut out and then rearranged to find common words, phrases or ideas were noted and linked between the different papers. An example of this process can be found in appendix 1E. The full list of the assumptions that were starting to develop and the authors and themes that contributed to them can be found in appendix 1F.

3.7 Phase V - Translating the studies into another

From this, stage five '*translating the studies into another*' took place. To maintain the central metaphors and concepts of the themes, quotes pertaining to each theme and the way authors spoke about the theme were also extracted (appendix 1G – example of translation 'family practices and rituals'). In analysing this information similar themes from the studies were grouped into categories of shared meaning (appendix 1F). From this analysis, key concepts were developed by the author considered as 'reciprocal translations'. A total of seven initial reciprocal translations - ideas that are alike and can be linked (Noblit & Hare, 1988) – were identified and listed in Table 1.6.

Table 1.6. List of reciprocal translations found during data extraction

1	**Family practices and rituals** (Boundaries; Values; Normal day-to-day practices; Ruptures; Valued/Included)
2	**Stigma of being in care and being normal** (Normal experiences; School peers; fitting in; having 'normal' experiences
3	**Emotional relationships** (Emotional pain)
4	**Family membership** (Family and social networks; Family membership; Permanency; Family Security; Birth family)
5	**Family language/ labels** (Language for birth family and foster family)
6	**Transitions** (Preparing; First days – meeting a new family; School; Leaving care and loss)
7	**Care experience stories/ memories** (memories/ symbols; Cultural identity; Stories of birth family)

3.8 Phase VI - Synthesising translations

The final stages of the data analysis involved *'synthesising translations'* (Noblit & Hare, 1988). All papers that contributed to each translation were then re-read for the quotes that were presented and the words the authors used to describe each theme. To ensure the reliability of the findings, the lead researcher consulted with his research supervisor and worked closely with a peer who was also completing a meta-ethnography review. In such meetings themes and their relevant sub-themes were refined through a process of critical discussion and

evaluation until the emergent themes were determined to be representative of the collected data.

During this phase some of the translations were found to link (e.g. 'felt membership to a family'; 'family practices'; 'family language/labels' and 'negotiating transitions'). Additionally, it was agreed that a 'felt membership to a family' could serve as an overarching theme and a key component to belonging. However, in answering the research question the key components to achieving this would be through family rituals, family language/labels and how transitions are navigated. These translations represented subthemes to the main theme of 'family membership'. The themes relevant to the initial translation of 'family membership' were then dissolved in the remaining themes and subthemes. Another translation of 'emotional relationships' when reviewing the data felt it was too generic and could dissolve into the other translations.

Finally, in discussion with the authors supervisor, after reviewing the remaining translations it was felt that 'managing stigma and difference' and 'care experienced stories/memories' would serve as themes in their own right. This was because managing stigma and difference explores how participants navigated differences within their explicit awareness. Whereas, care experiences stories/memories were not explicitly experienced as a difference by participants. Nevertheless, how they interacted with these stories could contribute to a sense of belonging or lack thereof.

From this, phase seven *'expressing the data'* was undertaken. The results are expressed in the results section below.

4. Results

4.1 Phase VII – Expressing the synthesis

The following phase presents the data in an appropriate way that seeks to address the research question. Table 1.7 illustrates the themes that were developed from the meta-ethnographic analysis.

Table 1.7 – Themes identified from the analysis

Themes	Subthemes
Felt membership to a family	Family practices/ rituals
	Family language/ labels
	Negotiating transitions
Care experience stories/memories and identity formation	
Managing stigma and difference	

4.1 Theme 1 - Felt membership to a family

Present across all studies, most participants described the level of harmony and general tone of the family household and the process that led them to feeling accepted, as one participant stated *"They've accepted me as their daughter and I've accepted them as my mum and dad"* (Dance & Rushton, 2005). These experiences encompassed both substitute families and participants' birth families. Authors took note of the subjective day-to-day reality of normal family life. Belonging to both families felt important but, sometimes, it was seen to compromise their sense of membership to their substitute family.

> *"I think it was just a reminder that actually the people who I saw as my family, weren't technically my family, so there was a lot of conflict emotionally there because I felt like they were my family. So it is like, life would just go by perfectly, like normal family life, and then you would just get this big glaring reminder that actually you are a bit weird, and you have got a different circumstance." (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021).*

This process of creating the normal family life was in part what developed the sense that *"you belong to me and I belong to you"* (Biehal, 2014). Belonging to both substitute and birth families was mixed, some participants aligned their loyalties to their birth families, *"I know that they are related to me and I can trust them"* (Biehal, 2014); whilst others acknowledged the disappointment when birth family relationships broke down:

> *"I hoped that I would get on with my Mum and her boyfriend and that I would be able to go on holiday — cause one year we all went on holiday together. But it only lasted about*

three days. We just didn't get on. Were you disappointed? Yes, because all I ever wanted was to be near my Mum and sisters…"(MacDonald & Marshall, 2021).

Most studies explored complex and fluid definitions of family. This may depend on how participants locate their foster families in relation to their birth families.

Subtheme - Family practices/rituals

In conceptualising components important to belonging, most studies discussed the day-to-day activity of 'family life' (Dance & Rushton, 2005). It was common to attribute family life to the ordinary family experiences, as one study described the significance of the 'seemingly small unremarkable or mundane family practices.' One participants shared *"The dinner was always on the table at the same time… there was always a routine"* (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021). Two studies described the physical presence of a house and its contents that prompted a sense of belonging, as one participant stated "that tarmac at the front, the kerb stones around the edge" or the importance of family photographs that included the foster child (Schofield, 2002; MacDonald & Marshall 2021). Participants distinguished a house from a *"home"* that extended to embrace the young person, where they can feel "*loved and cared"* for.

Being involved with family gatherings and celebrations in substitute family was also explored (Schofield, 2002; Biehal, 2014; MacDonald & Marshall, 2021), as one participant described:

> ***"****Like they take us out for days out and stuff. We go on a lot of holidays. Just like any normal family really. It's just like they act, they act the same as they would with their children and stuff."* (Biehal, 2014).

Both fostering and adoption studies directly discussed the importance of being a *"normal"* family member (Neil, 2012; Biehal, 2014; MacDonald & Marshall, 2021). Some participants compared themselves with birth children and wanted to be treated *"no differently"* (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021) and as *"normal"* siblings (Biehal, 2014). One participant stated; *"I was kind of allowed to make my own decisions like everybody else was in the house"* (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021). Although no quotes were explicit about this, it appeared that family membership took time and included a process of settling in (Dance & Rushton, 2005; Neil, 2012; Boddy, 2019), one adopted participant stated:

"I am actually feeling that I am actually part of this family and I am not adopted, I am beginning to actually fit in and everything…It's just they care for me in every way… they think I am nice, and they just love me". *(*Neil, 2012)

Part of this process also related to acknowledging the importance of contact with the foster family as an ongoing resource into adulthood, *"the family group chat, little stupid things like that makes you feel more included"* (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021). One participant described their foster mother as *"the first person I'd turn to"* having left care (Schofield, 2002). Additionally, two studies spoke about the importance of reciprocating care by giving presents, one participant gave *"some dumb art stuff"* (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021), another gave Christmas cards labelled *"mum and dad"* (Schofield, 2002). The findings share the importance the ritual of gift giving. Schofield (2002) shared that by subscribing to the family culture successfully, this seemed to lead to improved self-esteem and belonging for those in care.

Subtheme: Family language/labels

In most studies, participants spoke about a process of reconciling belonging to both sets of parents. Family language and labels were important in this process, participants in either adoptive or foster care used the terms *"real family"* (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021) or *"normal/first/original"* (Neil, 2012) or *"chosen mum"* (Boddy, 2019) to describe either birth parents and foster/adoptive parents. One adopted participant stated:

"You know I've got Jane [adoptive mum] and Bella [birth mum] which is still my mummy, but Bella's still my mummy, but she's my tummy mummy (referring to her birth mother) *but Jane's my real mummy* (referring to her foster carer)*" (girl, age 6). (Neil, 2012).*

Belonging to both families was often accommodated by the carers, and it was not seen to undermine the participant's sense of security/permanence in the substitute family (Neil, 2012; MacDonald & Marshall, 2021), one foster carer stated:

"She (foster child) said to me, I love being here and I love you, but I want to be with my mum. Does that make sense?" I say "Of course it does" (Sarah's foster carer) – (Biehal, 2014).

Distinguishing both parents through language was described as holding considerable symbolic significance to the children. Two studies explored how these labels are extended to birth children described as *"brothers and sisters"* (Biehal, 2014) or uncles and aunts for extended families (Schofield, 2002). Some participants spoke about being called 'brother/sister' or son/daughter by their substitute family which further displayed family membership and a sense of belonging (Biehal, 2014)

Finally, several participants and carers used of the word *"love"* to signal family membership and connection to both families (Schofield, 2002; Biehal, 2014; Richards, 2018; MacDonald, & Marshall, 2021). Whilst some studies spoke about love being felt after some time (Schofield, 2002; Richards, 2018). The language and labels used to describe their family were seen as evidence for the longevity of their connection with their families and confidence for the future. As Schofield (2002) described:

> 'The task of adapting to and accepting good care did not necessarily mean the giving up of existing defensive strategies, but it did mean becoming more flexible, better able to use reason and emotion, to feel and to think, to give as well as to accept love.' (Schofield, 2002)

Subtheme: Navigating transitions

Navigating transitions as a component to family membership and a sense of belonging was explored by seven studies. Several authors acknowledged the anxiety of moving into a foster family, describing it as a time of 'heightened state of awareness' (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021); or being 'mostly quiet and suspicious' of their new family (Schofield, 2002), developed from a 'genuine concern with security and safety' (Dance & Rushton, 2005). Important to both adopted and fostered young people were the 'first impressions', sharing how carers made them feel comfortable, safe and welcomed:

> *"I do remember we moved in we had our beds set up in our bedrooms and like these lovely duvet covers like, I can still remember it, mine had dolls on it and I can still picture them, and then like two sets of basic clothes, you know, just all new and laid out for us. Like nothing extravagant but you know, your socks and pants and stuff like that, pyjamas, a pair of slippers… I just felt welcome, you know and I think I felt at home pretty quickly*

and like I was wanted, you know and... so I guess valued… it was just very thoughtful and it was like, my needs mattered kind of thing." (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021)

The strong emotions associated with first meetings and the early days of placement were memorable to participants. One participant recalled *"snuggling into a nice, warm bed and knowing that my clothes were at the end of my bed*" (Schofield, 2002). Preparation of the physical environment invited participants to make the house into their home. This included being introduced to immediate and extended family members and friends, which helped to ease the transition.

In transitioning, many participants spoke about the anxieties of also moving to a new school, the prospect of new friends and a new environment (Dance & Rushton, 2005; Greenwood & Kelly, 2020). Some participants spoke about the importance of staff in supporting this transition:

> *"(the social worker) She made it easier between foster homes – being kind, saying it wasn't my fault . . . explaining it in very simple words to me what was going to happen so I knew all the way along" (Dance & Rushton, 2005)*

Others gave practical advice, *"on the first day I think one of the teachers should be your tour guide . . . so you are not late to lessons"* (Greenwood & Kelly, 2020). Transitions came with changes in friendships, family and school teachers and as one participant recalled, *"it was just me against the world, kind of thing. Because I didn't have my family"* (Ward, 2011). What felt important was having planned support in the initial transitions and ongoing support thereafter.

Finally, several studies spoke of the careful management of transitions out of care due to placement breakdown or becoming a care leaver (Barn, 2010; Rostill-Brookes et al., 2011; Ward, H. 2011). One participant spoke about the loss of belongings during transitions:

> *"I never really had any.... I mean what I left really was boxes, just boxes, mainly clothes but I never really had things. I mean, where I'd moved so much, even when I was a kid we moved quite a lot when I was little …Everything got lost somewhere along the line, so I never really had anything that I've kept through and through...Never got anything to keep really…they (foster carers) took all my photos I had of them, so I've got no photos of them" (Ward, 2011).*

These experiences highlighted the importance of belongings and objects as a link to family membership and the sense of belonging. The symbolic meaning behind these objects were described by authors as a 'reminder of their former lives and carers' and a 'tangible link to the past where they had once been a part of a family' (Ward, 2011). The withdrawal/loss of belongings was confirmation that a child no longer belonged to that family (Barn, 2010; Ward, 2011).

4.2 Theme 2 - Care experience stories/memories and identity formation

In order to hold both substitute and birth families in mind, participants appeared to want to make sense of their birth family stories and how they got into care. Richards (2018) study on adopted children stated that 'birth stories seek to anchor children to a biological family, birth country, and culture'. It is from here that identity is formed and a chance for alternative experiences of belonging can emerge. Specific to adoption was how children came to be in their adopted families, as one young person shared:

> "*I was found on a doorstep and somebody took me to the local police station. The police sent me to the children's home. The children's home arranged fostering for me and so I was fostered for about a year. A month before I was adopted, I was taken back to the children's home. I was then adopted and taken back to England."* (Louise, aged 9) (Richards, 2018).

One study shared how adopted children make sense of why their adoptive parents chose them, including that *"they (adoptive parents) can't have babies of their own"* or *"my mum said because I was special"* (Neil, 2012). What was important was a feeling of being wanted and cared for by their adopted family, that originated from, at times, a broken story of abandonment by birth parents. Similarly, in foster care, participants were tasked with making sense of their journey into care, which also came with difficult feelings:

> *"I was angry at my mum over it happening because, like I said, she was in care herself so she kind of let history repeat itself, so I was really angry with her, so my, like, relationship with her wasn't really that good."* (Boddy, 2019).

One study picked up specifically on *'musical memory'* as a connection for CIC to their past. In recalling past events, one participant stated:

"me and my brothers would make up routines to the songs and dance about" whilst another stated, *"This is a song from over the years of me and my sisters. [. . .] They're going to go through dark stages, but they've always got a home here and I'm always going to be there."* (Boddy, 2019).

It was through memories, sometimes triggered by music, that helped to form narratives with birth family members, leading to a sense of connection and some formation of identity. Interestingly, three studies on care leavers shared the importance of cultural/family identity in forming the participants' sense belonging (Schofield, 2002; Barn, 2010; Ward, 2011). One participant stated, *"it's very important for me to know my own culture"* (Barn, 2010), whilst another spoke openly about absent or half-hearted attempts to incorporate cultural traditions in their life:

"Like when it was, like Eid and stuff like that. OK she'd give me a little bit of money to get clothes and stuff but it was, like, special for me, it was like my kind of Christmas. And all that happened was I was bought clothes. What was I supposed to do? Sit at home wearing new clothes?" (Ward, 2011).

It is possible that for those in adoption, such stories can help to solidify the permanency of the relationship with adoptive parents. Whilst for foster children, as permanency is not always guaranteed, stories, memories and cultural identity form a way that these young people can develop a sense of belonging to birth relatives and/or cultural groups. This may feel more permanent than their experiences in foster care.

However, what was important in both adoption and foster care stories, was this facilitative conversation with their carers offering space to think about these stories and identities before coming into a substitute family. As identified by Schofield (2002), stories did not need to be 'all prettied up'. Instead, families and services are tasked to *'*fill the gaps that the absence of a biological family can create' (Richards, 2018), with the hope to develop richer narratives and a foundation to build a better sense of belonging.

4.3 Theme 3: Navigating stigma and difference

The perceived sense of belonging was seen to be compromised when participants were reminded of being in care. A total of four studies explored the stigma experienced from peers and teachers in school. Two of those studies explored participants' wish to be *'normal'*

(Rogers, 2017) or *'the same'* (Jones et al., 2020) as everybody else. This emphasis on sameness rather than difference, demonstrated some need to belong to a wider social group (Jones et al., 2020). Several participant's spoke about the way others responded to them as a result of their care status:

> *"It's like when teachers know you are in care they treat you differently ... they make a fuss and its awkward" (*Rogers, 2017).

Another participant stated that they were treated differently by teachers *'I can get away with murder'* (Jones et al., 2020). This sense of difference was also reinforced by peers, as one participant was told, "*at least I live with my mum"* (Rogers, 2017). For those adopted, some spoke about the secrecy of their adopted status and how others would *"give things away"* or *"spread it around"* (Neil, 2012). At times this would come from a place of teasing, on other occasions it would be from a place of curiosity and a desire to be caring and supportive. However, in both circumstances it can trigger a feeling of difference (Rogers, 2017).

Several studies spoke of ways participants attempted to reclaim their sense of belonging and be a part of society. One participant spoke about normalising being in care, *"I just talk normally to her like it's a normal everyday thing* (being a foster child) *because it is"* (Rogers, 2017). Others were careful with whom they shared their care status*,* however this often came with risks, as peers would ask more questions such as *"oh your mum is not like your real mum"* (Neil, 2012). Such questions further created a sense of difference and in many cases, was upsetting to talk about, particularly if they could not answer the questions.

In all studies, participants demonstrated the methods they use to negotiate ways to fit in. One study explored how participants opted to form their own in-groups with fostered peers:

> *"There was a girl at school called Jess, she was older than me. And she was in care and me and her, we treat each other like family, so I was her cousin, she's my cousin"* (Rogers, 2017)

Such examples presented opportunities to disclose care status, which served to strengthen the friendship. At times, these friendships equated to the sense of belonging that a family may provide. As one young person stated:

"Yeah, we're family. We're not blood, we just say we are sort of like cousins. We call each other Cuz...." another stated, *"It's quite fun. It's quite good knowing like they're in care so you're not the only person. I don't want to sound like nosey but its good knowing sort of what happened to them too. If they don't want to tell me, they don't have to tell me. But it's quite good knowing that like maybe they had the same situation as me"* (Rogers, 2017).

The papers in this theme shared the real tension for those in care. Whilst on the one hand wanting their care status to be private, participants also recognise the importance of peers and friendships to manage the stigma of being in care, lessening the pressure to be *'normal'* and an opportunity to develop a belonging narrative (Richards, 2018; Jones, et al., 2020).

5. Discussion

The aim of the meta-ethnography was to understand the components important to belonging for people who have experienced being in a substitute family.

5.1 Summary of findings

The research included in this synthesis suggests that there are several mechanisms at play that generate a sense of belongingness. Antonsich (2010) proposed that a part of belonging develops from the cultural and social framework of the group, encompassing the traditions and practices of that community. This is a consistent finding within the family practices/rituals subtheme of this review when speaking about family membership. Participants in this subtheme referred to the importance of the encounters within an ordinary family life. This included the practical components of living in a family that were explicit and provided a framework to build on. For example, family labels that symbolise relationships (e.g. mum/aunty) can be associated with the emotional bond and sense of connectedness for the person in care (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Shah, 2003).

The sense of wanting a 'normal' life was also spoken about in the 'navigating stigma and difference' theme. Specifically, participants highlighted how their looked-after or adopted labels often served to separate them from the wider group. Participants found ways to reclaim a sense of agency by choosing when and to whom to disclose their care status. This was an important process in normalising their care experience, whilst also solidifying friendships at school.

In many cases those who are adopted are often offered a more permanent sense of belongingness - including a safe space where they can feel at home. However, for both CIC and adopted participants, placement transitions were also seen as an important opportunity for professionals and carers to create a sense of belonging; this is supported in the literature (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Specifically, participants spoke of memories of transitions in their life, from entering to leaving care. This included how carers and professionals created a symbolic space that contributed to how comfortable and secure they felt e.g. having a "*Nice warm bed"* prepared for their first night. Additionally, the review has also suggested the importance of participants' relationships to their birth family. Specifically, some spoke of the importance of carers acknowledging and providing space for the connections participants have with their birth families – this component to belonging will be explored further in the recommendations section.

5.2 Clinical and research implications

5.3 Felt membership to a substitute family

The mundane family practices

Most participants spoke about the process of integrating into their substitute families. Antonsich (2010) argued for the importance of place-belongingness, where to belong means to find a place where an individual can feel 'at home'. In the present review, this was reflected in the way participants spoke about how family traditions and culture helped to evoke a sense of belonging. Importantly, this occurred through the gradual exposure to relationships and emotion-sharing that was facilitated via these traditions and cultures. One of the studies described it as the '*seemingly small, unremarkable or mundane family practices*' (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021). Research on multiculturalism has found that for those coming into a community, they need to be recognised as an integral part of that community, to be valued and listened to (Ameli & Merali, 2004, Buonfino & Thomson, 2007). When participants in this review spoke about feeling that they had a place in the family, they spoke about having a place at the dinner table, their pictures being on the wall, being treated "*no differently*" to birth children and having choice to make decisions. Similar to Hooks' (2009) description, a sense of home appeared to be a space of familiarity, security and importantly having a family role.

Managing family ambiguity through family labels/language

A family systems approach explores the processes that families go through to create clear boundaries that serve to define its members (Boss and Greenberg, 1984; Carroll, Olson & Buckmiller, 2007). Uncertainty over the boundaries where members are not clear about who is performing which roles and tasks may cause stress to this system, and may require a renegotiation of family roles (Boss, 1977; Crosbie-Burnett, 1989). The higher the uncertainty the higher the stress experienced by the family (Boss, 2006). Whilst families often gradually shift and change its members over time, for families that foster/adopt their boundaries can often suddenly change. This is particularly true for young people who require an emergency placement with short notice which can further a sense of family boundary ambiguity. Carroll et al., (2007) spoke about two main types of family boundary ambiguity:

1. Type 1 - Psychological presence within the family but physical absence.
2. Type 2 - The family member is physically present but psychologically absent in the minds of the family.

Those in substitute care often have to navigate the boundaries of their birth family as well as their foster/adoptive family. In the review, participants spoke about the distinction between birth and substitute families, describing the *"normal/first/original"* (Neil, 2012) or *"chosen mum"* (Boddy, 2019) to describe either foster parents and birth parents. Importantly, the language used was accommodated by foster/adoptive parents. It is possible that drawing these boundaries helped participants to experience a sense of place and psychological presence, providing a sense of belongingness in both families. However, it appeared that this felt more achievable for adopted participants. A possible reason for this was the sense of permanency provided with adoption. For those in foster care, the courts often ultimately decide whether a placement is to continue (Lee & Whiting, 2007). This may therefore explain why it can take time for those in foster care to experience a sense of belongingness. Considering this, it can be useful to view a placement as a family reconfiguration, where family labels and roles are seen as an important step to developing a sense place-belongingness and role importance for the young person.

Transitions

Family reconfiguration occurs from the moment a young person transitions into a substitute family. Tackling family boundary ambiguity appeared to be an important duty for foster carers in creating a sense of belonging for the young person in care. The task involves incorporating methods that create a sense of physical and psychological presence for the young person in care. Navigating expected and unexpected transitions as a component to family membership was discussed in most studies. One participant spoke about the anxiety of moving placement, being on a 'heightened sense of awareness' as they feared for their own security and safety (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021). Placement transitions have been highlighted as a difficult time for those in care. Specifically, research has suggested that children who experience multiple placements are more likely to present with attachment difficulties (Palmer, 1996). This was supported by Unrau et al., (2008) who found that unexpected transitions expose "already damaged" children to repeated levels of distress, impacting their ability to form friendships and regulate their emotions. Participants in this review spoke of their memories of transitions also extended beyond the foster family and into their first days at a new school as one spoke of their memory of having a tour guide

It has been acknowledged that foster children should be able to keep in contact with foster parents and their birth children (Matching in foster care, 2020). This is consistent with care leavers in this review still feeling part of their foster family when given the opportunity to stay in touch. The present findings also speak to the importance of managing physical belongings at the end of placements. Having these removed made one review participant feel they no longer belonged to the family, a finding consistent with previous research linking a sense of loss of belonging to the loss of possessions (Ward, 2011). Thus, the present findings suggest that alongside careful management of person-person contact opportunities post placement, it is also important to carefully manage access to the physical things that have contributed to a sense of belonging for the young person whilst in care.

5.4 Navigating stigma and difference

Yuval-Davis (2006) found that it can feel necessary to assimilate the language, culture and values of the dominant group in order to belong. However, there might always remain other factors (e.g., skin colour, accent) that prevent full sameness and expose the person to being

excluded. Both adopted and fostered participants in this review spoke about the process of assimilating, of wanting to be seen as 'normal' (Rogers, 2017) or 'the same' (Jones et al., 2020), but of having to navigate their care status. This was mostly experienced with peers at school. Driscoll (2011) spoke of the importance of school in providing a normalising environment where children in substitute families can detach themselves from their care status. Whilst assimilation would feel important, it can be argued that secrecy of this kind can have a negative impact on the young person. One example includes young people's care status being internalised as a form of damage (Dansey, Shbero & John, 2019). Additionally, such secrecy can undermine the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with peers, of accepting and being accepted – a key component to belonging (Rogers, 2017; Dansey et al., 2019).

Therefore, it is important that those in substitute families are able to exercise oppositional agency where they are able to decide who they disclose their care status to (Jensen, 2011). The choice to disclose is important as once information is disclosed, it cannot be withdrawn. This was an important finding in the current review. Participants spoke about their experiences of bullying as a result of sharing their care status, one participant shared being told by another child "*at least I live with my mum"* (Rogers, 2017). However, whilst some participants spoke about the careful process of disclosing their care status, participants in one study (Rogers, 2017) actively sought other care experienced young people in their school, forming a separate in-group. Such connections to care appeared to transcend friendship and lead to automatic family status, with labels of 'cousin' being used to describe the relationship – thus representing an important route to enhancing sense of belonging. Although this was only explicitly presented by one paper. This further emphasises the importance of children in care having agency over when and how their care status is disclosed to.

5.5 Recommendations

5.6 Paying particular attention to transitions into a foster or adoptive family and out of care

Navigating transitions as a component of family membership and belonging was explored in most studies in this review. Therefore, it would be important to think carefully about these phases in a young person's life. Of importance to participants were their initial experiences leaving a previous placement and entering a new one. Participants in this review shared that

their anxiety about a new placement often started at the point they were told about the family.

Before a transition occurs

It is important to hold in mind the two types of family boundary ambiguity highlighted by Carroll et al. (2007). Considering this, it would be important for services to find ways to create a sense of psychological presence of the young person within the family system they are going into. That is to find ways that the young person feels accepted as part of the family group. Not all placement transitions are the same, some transitions can be carefully planned whilst others are unexpected and may occur on the same day. However, practices can still be used to support transitions. This can include providing a non-blaming and compassionate space that provides a clear explanation of what will happen next when a young person is first told about a transition. Another example can include finding ways to share a profile of the family they are going in to including the members, their interests and family routines. This can include pictures of the young person's new bedroom or activities that are available nearby. This is particularly important for when placements breakdown suddenly and there has not been an opportunity to provide a gradual transition. Additionally, this review has highlighted the importance of belongings for those in and out of care. During transitions, key belongings can go missing, it would be a priority of those supporting the transition to identify photographs, important objects and other items that can provide a narrative for the young person to anchor to.

First impressions

Finally, this review shared the importance of 'first impressions' (MacDonald & Marshall, 2021). Important to these first impressions were how carers created a welcoming environment in their home. Participants highlighted the importance of their bedroom space. That the essentials such as bedding and clothing created a safe space to place their belongings. As part of the first impressions, carers are asked to think about the labels young people in care can use to address the family. It could be helpful for families to think carefully with professionals about their own family boundaries before placement occurs. This can help to set the boundaries for a young person and ease some of the anxiety of the process.

Transitions into a new placement can trigger transitions into a new school. Professionals supporting a young person should think carefully about this transition. Participants shared the value in having a point of contact with teachers and peers. Additionally, over time it could be helpful for teachers, foster carers and social care staff to jointly explore the meaning behind a care experienced label for the young person. This can help a young person to navigate their story within their school, including how they would like to be seen and empower them to choose who they share their narrative with.

Being included in family rituals and creating new ones

A key component to belonging found in this review was establishing 'mundane family practices' (MacDonald, & Marshall, 2021) that incorporated the young person. Before placement occurs, it could be helpful for foster families to work with their social workers to think carefully about their roles as a family, focusing on what they do together as a family including their family rituals and values. This can include how meals are eaten as a family, whether the family go on outings together, what television programmes are watched together etc. Importantly, it would be helpful to think about the connections the foster/adoptive family have with friends, extended family and their community. The focus would be on finding ways to incorporate the young person in these relationships. Additionally, foster families and social workers should think carefully about rituals and values important to the young person and how that can be incorporated into the existing family boundaries and rituals. This can include foods that are important to the young person, or showing interest in their hobbies and interests.

5.7 A connection to birth stories

Most people have the story of their childhood retained by parents and extended family. For children in care these memories, both sensory and visual may be traumatic. In many cases children are separated from people who can support their understanding of their history and as such enter placements with a fragmented past. Holding this in mind, this review highlighted the importance for systems to still make space for the connection young people have to their past. As described for those adopted, spaces to speak about their past were explored with their adoptive parents and gave a sense of past belongingness. Awareness of how young people can be triggered by their environment to recall important memories felt important, for

example, for some participants, certain music when played prompted memories to their past. Schofield (2002) discussed how stories do not need to be *'all prettied up'* and that it is the task of services and families to help fill the gaps. Part of this gap filling is supported by life story work. The process takes an autobiographical narrative involving both past adverse experiences and current experiences of safe relationships. Such stories appear to be important to identity development as it helps anchor children to a birth family and culture (Pasupathi, Mansour & Brubaker, 2007; Richards, 2018). Part of this gap filling is supported by life story work. The process takes an autobiographical narrative involving both past adverse experiences and current experiences of safe relationships. Such stories appear to be important to anchor children to a birth family and culture (Richards, 2018). It is possible that this process can be useful in expressing the individual's story, giving them permission to also integrate themselves into their substitute family.

5.8 Limitations

Incorporating both fostered and adopted participants

The rationale for including both adopted and fostered participants related to the limited number of UK papers explicitly speaking about belonging in foster care. Additionally, scoping also revealed that both sets of participants experience similar processes of living in a substitute family. However, the current review only had 2 papers involving 54 participants who were adopted, this is in comparison to 10 papers exploring the experiences of 204 participants who have been fostered. Therefore, it could be argued that it is more difficult to generalise the views of adopted participants compared to those fostered.

However, although only 2 adoption papers were used, there were contributions from one or both of them in every theme apart from the subtheme 'transitions'. One reason for their omission from this subtheme could be related to the permanency that adoption provides when compared to fostering. Overall, the results reflect the similarities that those adopted and those fostered experience when finding ways to belong in substitute families. This supports the validity of combing both.

Researcher bias

Meta-ethnography is itself interpretive and involves the translation of findings from studies into each other, therefore there are multiple hermeneutic levels involved. These levels will

have been influenced by my own cultural and historical values. Being a birth child of a foster family for several years of my life, such experiences have influenced the interpretations I have made in relation to defining the participant experiences of belonging. It is possible that I was attracted to participant experiences that I myself experienced with my foster siblings. It is possible that somebody without my experiences would have less bias in their interpretations.

However, to balance this the opportunities for reflexivity such as keeping a reflective log and using supervision provided opportunities to bring these biases into awareness. The process offered the opportunity to notice bias as it arose during the analysis. Additionally, the analysis involved multiple researchers which helped to increase the review's rigor. Finally, the author consistently met with a wider meta-ethnography support group, learning from the reviews completed by peers and used supervision to explore this further with their own review.

5.9 Conclusions

The findings suggest a process that young people in substitute families go through that lead to experiences of belonging, with – in the first review of its kind – a specific focus on the UK context. The review highlights the importance of belonging and provides practical and structured observations as to how foster carers and professionals involved can support a sense of belonging for young people who are in care or leaving care. Importantly, creating a sense of belonging within a family can take time. What has been emphasised in this review is the value of everyday attempts to reduce family boundary ambiguity and strengthen the presence of the young person in the family unit and the surrounding system. This inevitably contributes to a young person’s experience of belonging.

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Chapter 2 Empirical Paper: Understanding the experiences of non-White ethnic minority care leavers who have experienced a placement with a White foster family

1. Abstract

Background: There is limited evidence in the UK which examines the first-hand experiences of non-White care leavers. This is further limited when focusing specifically on experiences of living in a foster family of a different race and/or ethnicity to the individual. The present study aimed to explore the experiences of belonging and difference for non-White individuals who have experienced foster placements with families of a different race and/or ethnicity.

Method: Four non-White care leavers all with experience of living in a White foster family were interviewed. The interviews were supported using photo elicitation and data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Interviews explored the way participants make sense of their care experience and how that has shaped them as care leavers.

Results: Participants described an experience of feeling like the odd one out, much of which was influenced by systemic racism and the barriers to cultural connection. Participants found ways to reconnect and find a sense of belonging. This was achieved during and after care by accessing opportunities to create the 'little family'. Participants were particularly interested in accessing racial diversity and found ways to relate to their heritage through birth family stories.

Conclusion: The study highlights the difficulties children experience when attempting to integrate in a family from a different race to themselves. The findings suggest ways participants use their agency to make informed decisions to regain their cultural identity whilst in care and as care leavers.

2. Background

2.1 Defining race and ethnicity

Racial identity can be defined as a sense of group identity on the perception of shared racial heritage based on physical/biological traits e.g., skin colour (Helms, 1990). Ethnic identity, on the other hand, refers to the sense of belonging to an ethnic group that share important components, such as common values, beliefs, customs and shared history (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). It has been understood that the term 'racial identity' is often simplified and has no biological basis, but it often continues to operate within a socio-political construct, designed to divide people into groups ranked as superior and inferior (Gilroy, 1987; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). This process of racial categorisation and bias can occur at a young age, with evidence to suggest that children as young as three are able to categorise and express bias based on race, preferring Whiteness (Feagin & Van Ausdale, 2001; Hirschfeld, 2008).

2.2 Acculturation

Part of racial categorisation comes with the process of acculturation. This process describes the alterations that result from continuous, direct contact between a minority culture and a more dominant culture. Greater acculturation is both the result and cause of a loss of one's own culture of origin. (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936; Berry, 1997). Berry's (1997) biodimensional model of acculturation is the most widely studied of the theories of acculturation. Berry proposes four strategies/outcomes of acculturation outlined in table 2.1:

Table 2.1 - Berry's (1997) biodimensional model of acculturation

Assimilation	Individuals seek consistent contact with the dominant culture and avoid maintaining their original ethnic identity.
Separation	These individuals are the opposite to the assimilation group, rejecting/avoiding the dominant culture in favour of preserving their ethnic identity
Integration	Individuals embrace both cultures, valuing the original culture whilst maintaining regular contact with the dominant ethnic group.
Marginalisation	These individuals lose all cultural connection, both rejecting their culture of origin and failing to adopt the practices of the new, dominant culture.

2.3 Exploring the experiences of non-White children in care

Studies exploring this process of acculturation have suggested that integration will lead to the most adaptable functioning with less psychological distress (López & Contreras 2005; Vasquez, Gonzalez-Guarda & De Santis, 2011), less anxiety (López & Contreras, 2005) and higher levels of self-esteem (Berry, 2005). Sporton and Valentine (2007) echoed this finding stating that in order for people to belong they must be able to express their own identity in the dominant culture. An outcome of not integrating can lead to a de-identified personality, the individual may feel like a relative stranger in both cultures leading to psychological distress (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1935). The experience of CIC is often marked with changes in family culture which often become the dominant culture as children shift between placements. In the process of spending time in care, many children lose their cultural identity, receive a collective identity (care experienced) and are stereotyped and stigmatised in society (Ferguson, 2016).

It has been recognised that although minority ethnic young people in care, including those of mixed heritage face similar challenges to their White counterparts, these young people are likely to experience the additional impact of racism and discrimination (Barn et al., 2005). Considering Berry's biodimensional model of acculturation, even with attempts to assimilate, there always remain dimensions such as race and ethnicity that highlight difference and expose a person in care to societal exclusion. In addition to social exclusion and marginalisation, there has been concern in the care community about ways in which minority ethnic young people struggle to make sense of their racial and ethnic identity in a White-dominant racialised society (Banks, 1992; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993; Barn & Harman, 2006).

2.4 Ethnic matching vs. transracial placements

One way of tackling this has been through ethnic matching. This is when the CIC is matched with a foster carer from the same ethnic background as them (Ridley & Wainwright, 2013). The focus here is on increasing exposure to a young person's culture and identity, resulting in a position of 'integration'. According to the Fostering in England (2020) report, the number of CIC in England in 2020 was 80,080, 86% of foster carers were categorised as White and only 11% were from other minority ethnic groups in local authorities. However, 23% of children in care are from a non-White ethnic group (Fostering in England, 2018). Therefore, whilst there has been an ongoing debate about the role of race and ethnicity in matching children and foster carers or adopters, there is a disproportionate number of ethnic minority CIC than there

are minority ethnic foster carers. This is before trying to match to the specific race and ethnicity of the young person. Because of this, in many cases, non-White CIC are frequently placed in families with ethnic majority backgrounds or families from a different ethnicity/race to themselves (Padilla et al., 2010). Known as transracial fostering, this is the placement of CIC in families that are racially and ethnically different to them (Johnson et al., 2013). Transracial placements have previously been advocated as a way of reducing the disproportionately high number of Black children in residential care (Small, 1986). The focus therefore was on moving away from the notion of 'White parents of a Black child' to a 'multi-ethnic/transracial family'.

There is a limited amount of research into transracial fostering, much of the research has been abroad e.g. Australia and the experiences of Aboriginal children (Raman et al., 2017). For the research in the UK, there has been some evidence to suggest that whilst ethnic matching would be helpful, some CIC did not necessarily want to be placed in a family from the same race and/or ethnicity to themselves, instead preferring the stable transracial placement they were in (Selwyn & Riley, 2015). Despite the limited research, the available literature has influenced current policy guidelines. Specifically, section 22 (5) (c) of the Children's Act 1989 states that:

> *"when placing a child, it is important for authorities to give due consideration to a young person's religious needs, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background when identifying suitable placement opportunities"*

Foster families are encouraged to celebrate a child's ethnicity and engage the whole family in the child's culture. This was echoed at a care experienced conference in 2019, where care experienced people stated that children in care need to experience "love, hugs and warmth" (Hugman, 2019).

Where there is transracial fostering, the family and CIC can experience a range of challenges which need to be taken into account when matching children with potential families. Interactions with racial minorities exposes White parents to the unique experiences and challenges their child may face as a racial minority in society. When such racial and ethnic boundaries are crossed, the research has some consensus in the importance of racial and cultural socialisation of the CIC (Barn, 2010).

Several factors have been understood to influence White foster parents' openness to supporting this process and participating in activities that promote a young person's cultural identity development. Coakley and Orme (2006) discussed the importance of 'cultural receptivity' of foster parents which focuses on their openness to learning parenting skills necessary for parenting transracially. Foster parent colour-blind attitudes have been suggested to be a barrier to cultural receptivity, with higher colour-blind attitudes associated with reduced socialisation (Gibbs, 2017). The problem here is that a rhetoric of sameness by a dominant ethnic group prevents recognition of difference and the consequences that come with this e.g., racism. Specifically, Smith, Juarez and Jacobson (2011) found in the USA that although White parents encouraged transracial adopted children to be proud of being Black, they often neglected to give them the necessary cognitive tools to combat racism when that belief was challenged. Instead, choosing to focus on the notion that White people are not intentional when there is race-based harm. The authors reflected on the implications of this way of thinking. Specifically, they suggested that the assumption of racial innocence of Whiteness recentred and recreated the White racial frame, whilst failing to challenge the existing racial hierarchy and associated privileges with being White (Smith et al., 2011).

Additionally, foster parents' previous multicultural experiences, access to multicultural communities and overall cultural receptivity have been reported to impact foster carer willingness to engage with a CIC's cultural identity (Coakley & Orme, 2006; Hrapczynski & Leslie, 2018). Therefore, it can be said that supporting the ethnic identity for a non-White CIC can become a highly complex task within transracial fostering (Scherman, 2010; Rosnati, 2015).

However, the majority of studies that have been conducted in this area have focused on White foster parents' experiences. The concern here is that guidelines for best practice are developed without hearing the voice of the non-White individual with experience of transracial placements. According to Baginsk, Gorin & Sands (2017) in a review of the fostering system in England, of the studies that reported participant ethnicity, the predominant responses were from White children. This was also found in Chapter 1 of this thesis. The review concluded that there is an 'urgent need' for the views and experiences of ethnic minority children and young people to be sought and better understood. Additionally, a review by Castle, Knight & Watters (2011) found limited research evidence exploring ethnic

identity and positive outcomes in CIC. Specifically, they found only one study in the United Kingdom, with the majority conducted in America.

2.5 The current study

Therefore, the current project explored the experiences of non-White care leavers who have experienced being in care with a White foster family or a family from a different race and/or ethnicity to them. The focus was on care leavers, whose retrospective accounts of their experiences both have the potential to bring additional insight developed via post-care experience, and to inform about the long-term impacts transracial fostering can have.

Using semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation, the focus was on exploring how care leavers make sense of these racial differences, understand their relationship to their foster family and how they explore race and culture with their family, school and with the wider service including professionals involved in their care.

3. Method

3.1 Design

3.2 Participant recruitment and sample description

Due to the ideographic nature of the research, the current study used a purposive sampling method. Purposeful sampling allows for the selection of particular individuals knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest leading to rich contextual information (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This research seeks to explore the experiences of non-White care leavers who have been in a foster placement with family that is of a different ethnicity to them. The decision to open recruitment up to the experiences of being in a family of a different race more generally rather than just a White foster family was taken because of previous difficulty in recruitment. Full details of the recruitment process are elaborated in Appendix 2A. Initially recruitment was sought by contacting CIC authorities as many have links with care leavers. It felt important to ask professionals involved to contact potential participants. This was in the hope that such individuals would have already developed a relationship with the participant.

However, recruitment from the local authorities was unsuccessful. This could be due to a number of reasons, one of which was possibly the pressures that services were under during the COVID pandemic meaning they could not support a research project. Another difficulty

may be that participants did not themselves want to participate because of the nature of the project.

Considering this, as there was not a specific requirement for a local demographic, participants were recruited from across the UK. With the help of clinicians in looked after children services, known care leaver charities across the UK were contacted individually with an information sheet detailing the study and information on what was required from them. These charities and prominent people in care leavers societies suggested tagging them in a post on twitter and including the research poster, which reached their group members including care leavers (appendix 2B). Those participants that were interested were given an information sheet (appendix 2C) and given opportunities to meet with the lead researcher through video/telephone call if they had questions. Participants were then asked to complete a consent form and return it as a hard copy or respond through email (appendix 2D). At the end of the interview, participants were given a debrief form (appendix 2E) and a demographic questionnaire to complete (2F).

A care leaver is defined under the Children's Act (2000) as 'anyone who has spent any time at any point in the care of the state, whether that be residential care (inclusive of secure settings), foster care or kinship care.' The time in care can range from as little as a few months to as long as a person's whole childhood. This definition encompassed the participants recruited to this study.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

To ensure an appropriate sample was selected, the study implemented inclusion and exclusion criteria, found in table 2.2.

Table 2.2 - Inclusion and exclusion criteria for participant recruitment

Inclusion criteria	Rationale for use
• Non-White ethnic minority	• As the research is looking at interviewing people from non-White backgrounds, it was important to include this criterion.

• Care leaver/care experienced	• As the research is exploring experiences of people who have left mandatory care orders, they would be classified as care leavers/care experienced and so this inclusion criterion necessary.
• Lived in a family with a foster family or a family that is a different race and/or ethnicity to them for at least one month	• The experiences of non-White care leavers is particularly important in relation to their experiences in White foster families (dominant group) and in foster families from a different race/ethnicity to them to open the recruitment pool. Participants are asked to have been in the placement for at least 1 month to contextualise their experiences.

Exclusion criteria	**Rationale for use**
• Unable to speak the English language	• As the research required the individual to answer open ended questions about their experiences it was important for the participant to be able to speak the English language in the hope of drawing out richer data.

Sample

A total of five participants were recruited, aged between 24-34 years old. One of the participants requested to remove their data during the two-week reflective window after the interview. This left a total of four participants which is within the range of participant numbers typically included in IPA (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). All participants were recruited through twitter.

Demographic information is presented in Table 2.3. The table provides only information that allows for anonymity. All participants described their experience living in a White foster family, which is the dominant foster placement racial makeup in the UK.

Table 2.3. Participant demographic information

	Participant 1 - Remy	Participant 2 - Anita	Participant 3 - Priya	Participant 4 - Sarah
Age	25	24	24	34
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Female
Ethnicity	African	Indian	Pakistani	Mixed White and Asian
Religion	Christian	Atheist	Muslim	No religion
Additional languages spoken	Yoruba	None	Urdu and Punjabi	"bits of lots of languages, but not fluently."
Age when first went into care	14	15	15	6 months
Number of foster placements	2	6	3	5
Length of time in each foster placement (placement discussed in interview underlined)	**Placement 1** - 5 months	Unclear of other placements **Main placement** – 2 years	**Placement 1** – 1 month (Pakistani family) **Placement 2** – 4/5 months (Pakistani family) **Placement 3** - 8 years (continued to stay with foster carer)	**Placement 1**- 5 months, **Placement 2** - 6 months, **Placement 3&4**- not sure, **Placement 5** - 5 years with some periods at home

Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by the local authorities with connections with care leavers and the University of Birmingham Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee (see appendix 2G). Several ethical issues were considered for this research are outlined in table 2.4.

Table 2.4 - Ethical issues

Ethical issue	How it was addressed
• **Discussions on race and difference may be a highly emotive conversation for the participant particularly if they have not had these conversations before. This may lead to participants becoming distressed.**	• Prompts were used in the interview to check in with the participants emotional wellbeing. • The interview had a balanced approach to exploring difference and belonging. • Participants were given a list of support services and offered check in phone calls after the interview should they wish.
• **Right to withdraw**	• Participants were also reminded about their right to pause/discontinue their interview or not have to answer interview questions if they are particularly triggering. That this would not impact their compensation if they have already attended for the interview.
• **Informed consent**	• As participants were above the age of 16 they could provide their own informed consent.
• **Confidentiality and anonymity**	• The content of the interviews remained confidential unless a risk to self or others was indicated in which case the interviewer was required to break confidentiality. For the purposes of contacting participants only email addresses were collected as a point of contact as further information was not justified (e.g. phone numbers and address details).

• **Use of photo elicitation and risk of sharing unconsented pictures or identifiable pictures in the interview.**	• Participants were given guidelines on how to take pictures e.g. asking for consent if taking pictures of people. Participants were also asked for verbal consent to use their non-identifiable pictures in the write up of this project. This was also clarified verbally in the consent form (point number 10)

3.3 Data collection

A semi structured interview schedule was developed that covered experiences of belonging and difference within one or several placements where the participant has experienced living in a family that is of a different race and/or ethnicity to them. All participants spoke about living with a White foster family.

The interview questions

The interview questions were piloted and a consultation exercise was also carried out at the 'Children in Care Council' to explore young people's views and reactions to the kind of questions included in the study and their thoughts on areas that would be important to cover (appendix 2H). This was important because these young people were better positioned to provide an idea of what would be helpful as they themselves were currently in care. From this several key areas were identified as important to explore including the foster family, birth family, experiences in school and in the community. With the help of clinicians who have worked with care leavers, the interview schedule was adapted to include experiences leaving care (see appendix 2I). Examples of questions include:

1. Thinking back were you aware of looking different to your foster family?
2. Did conversations about your race/ethnic identity ever come up at school?
3. What was the racial/ethnic background of the community you lived in?

As the literature on this topic is scarce the interview was adapted as participants were interviewed. Feedback was sought after each interview from participants. For example, the generic questions about the foster family were moved from the 'opening questions' section to just before the participant spoke about their specific foster family (appendix 2D – adapted

areas highlighted in blue). This was moved because both the first participant and lead researcher felt that the conversation would flow better with this change.

Use of photos to support conversations

Semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity to understand the psychological and social world of participants (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Considering the sensitive nature of the topic of this research, it is possible that it may be difficult for participants to speak about their experiences. A way to support participants is to use a photo elicitation method. This involves the use of photos within an interview setting (Harper, 2002). Using photos can create a "comfortable space for discussion" (Epstein et al. 2006: pp. 8) that does not limit responses. Additionally, the researcher can get a sense of what photos mean to the participants.

Therefore, the current research used photos as a way to supplement the semi-structured interview. Before meeting, participants were given an option of completing a photo task to support the interview (appendix 2J). Three out of four participants provided photos. The photos were then explored at the beginning of the interview through an open-ended question '*can you tell me a little about why you chose these pictures?'*. This was then related to the meaning behind living in a White foster family, their experiences of belonging and of feeling different in their life. For the participant that did not bring pictures, they were prompted about images in their mind. Importantly, participants were reminded that they did not have to answer any question they did not want to.

Interview setting

Participants were given the choice of a face-to-face interview at the University or a video call using a secure version of zoom. All four participants opted for a video call, this was partly influenced by convenience and as recruitment was from around the UK all participants would have had to travel to attend a face-to-face meeting.

3.4 Data analysis

Understanding the lived experience

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is concerned with the lived experiences of individuals, focused on the meaning behind the experiences (Smith, 2011; Smith, Flowers, &

Larkin, 2009). The complex understanding of experience is in itself "unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009: pp 24). Grounded in a critical realist philosophy, this position assumes that reality can exist independently of the researcher, and that knowledge about the world can be understood through the lens of how people make sense of their observations (Husserl, 1970; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA is a structured approach that focuses on the specific experience of an individual and how they makes sense of what is happening to them. This is then layered in the concept of the double hermeneutic – participants first try and make sense of their experience (the first layer), on which the researcher makes their own interpretation (the second layer). Overall, this helps to comprehend how the events have been understood by those who have lived through them (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009)

IPA was considered appropriate to examine the experiences of non-White children in care who have experienced being in a foster family that is of a different race and/or ethnicity to them, given the research focus furthering understanding of individual experiences in depth. Using IPA, participants' individual stories in how they make sense of their care experience were analysed. Commonalities were then examined across participants to generate a picture of the group of participants' experiences. An outline of the process can be found in table 2.5. Appendix 2K presents an extract of an annotated transcript that demonstrates an example of using the procedure to conduct IPA as suggested by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009).

Table 2.5 - The process of conducting IPA as suggested by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009)

Reading and re-reading	This process involved familiarisation with the data, the researcher is asked to immerse themselves in participants experiences. Each transcript should be read at a time completing each stage before moving on.
Initial noting	This involved a line-by-line coding of the language used by participants. Coding occurred at three levels and noted in the margins of the transcript (appendix 2K): 1. *Descriptive comments:* Highlighted in *red* and involves describing the comments made by participants at face value. 2. *Linguistic comments:* Highlighted in *light blue* and involves exploring the language used by the participant, this included acknowledging pauses, laughter, repeated phrases etc.

3. *Conceptual comments:* Highlighted in *green* and comprised a more interpretative level focusing on the meaning behind participant comments.

Developing emergent themes	This process involved bringing together the initial notes made earlier and grouping similar sections of text creating emerging themes.
Searching for connections across emergent themes	The emergent themes were then placed into emerging superordinate and subordinate themes (example can be found in appendix 2L) and a summary vignette was produced to better able to contextualise their experience, leading onto the next phase of the process. This process was completed in turn, the lead researcher used ways to bracket off ideas from the previous participant when moving off to the next participant. This was through their own reflective journal and waiting a few days before moving onto the next participant.
Looking for patterns across cases	Once all themes were identified for each participant, the next step involved finding connections between participants. The participants' case vignettes were then compared using a colour coding (appendix 2M). The emergent themes and subthemes were then put together (appendix 2N) and used to create the final superordinate and subordinate themes described in the results section.

Validity and Reflexivity

During the development of themes, I consulted with my supervisor across the different stages, reviewed emerging themes between and across participants. Additionally, I worked with a peer where we reviewed a cross-section of the data and presented our findings to each other. These findings were then used to adjust the themes and re-reviewed to provide a fair representation of the data.

Due to the double hermeneutic present within the process of IPA, it is important for a researcher to reflect on the influence they may have on the interpretation of the data. My interest in the experiences of non-White children in care started from my experiences as a birth child of a foster family. We supported CIC from birth to the age of 16 and who were themselves from different ethnic backgrounds. During this time, I was acutely aware of my parents' experiences of navigating the young person's culture. For example, buying a

children's books on the Qu'ran for one foster child. Another example included supporting a refugee from Afghanistan to meet with friends that he travelled with from his country. Possibly not explicitly known to us at the time, these experiences helped to bring a sense of belonging and connection for these young people. This included a deeper connection with children's birth families e.g., CIC speaking to birth mum about prayers from the Qu'ran.

Following these experiences, throughout my professional life I have continued to think about CIC, completing a research project on foster parents during my master's degree and as a trainee clinical psychologist working in a looked after children service. As an Asian male myself I have found myself on the receiving end of discrimination and I am fascinated in the unique experiences of CIC and how they navigate the intersections of both being a non-White ethnic minority and care experienced. Therefore, when the opportunity arose to develop my own research project, I jumped at the idea of exploring this area.

My experiences have given me both a professional and personal experience of supporting CIC. Although these experiences are valuable in understanding some of the difficulties that could be present, my lens can be a source of bias when interpreting the data. This bias presented itself during the analysis through comparing participants' experiences to my own. Another example included noticing that I became more engaged with times participants spoke of their frustrations with services, which triggered my own frustrations.

Therefore, throughout the interview, transcription and analysis process, I maintained a reflective diary in which I recorded initial thoughts, reflections and questions about how the participants have made sense of their experiences whilst holding in mind my own personal experiences and how those may be influencing my analysis of the data. Due to the sensitive nature of the reflective diary the author has not included it in the appendices of this thesis. Additionally, it was felt that by detailing the authors personal experience as a birth child of a foster family, that this is enough to give the reader an idea of the reflections made during this process.

4. Results

Participants[2] shared their experience of living with one particular White foster family that they had lived with for a considerable time. They discussed their experiences in relation to their time in the family, in the community and at school. Analysis of the data identified three superordinate themes and three subordinate themes. Table 2.6 contains an outline of the themes.

Table 2.6 – Themes identified from the analysis

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
The odd one out	
Systemic racism and the barriers to cultural connection	
Choosing the pathway to belonging	Finding the 'little family'
	An attraction to diversity
	Access and connection to birth family culture

4.1 The odd one out

Broadly, all participants spoke of their experiences of isolation and disconnection during their time in care, some spoke of this continuing after leaving care.

Remy

Remy spoke openly about this sense of difference and isolation that he felt during and after care.

> *"I didn't feel like I was part of the family, I felt different, when they go on holiday they go by themselves and they leave you there and they don't take you, when they go to restaurants they don't take you, I just felt different, you can tell this person is not really part of the family"*

[2] Participants names have been changed to respect their anonymity.

This sense of difference was compounded by his care status and the influence of '*money'* on him living with the family:

> *"I wasn't happy being there because they cared more about the money, the profit they are going to make, the money they are going to use to go on holidays and everything, so they really care more about that I think."*

(Picture shared by Remy when discussing foster carer motivations)

The discussion about profit and money was a way that Remy felt more as an object than a part of the family. Remy often revisited his experiences of feeling alienated from this family, including not being involved in family rituals such as holidays/restaurants.

Importantly, Remy spoke openly how this feeling of difference was also connected to the "*obvious"* racial differences between him and his foster family:

> *"I just felt different, you can tell this person is not really part of the family so I think that was when I could really see the colour of my skin a lot more, like I said they were all different umm when they go out, even they used to have a hot tub and everything, they go in there and don't want you to come in there."*

Remy felt his foster families attempt to be culturally receptive was "*non-genuine*" and forced. This was felt early into his placement. This experience of difference also influenced how Remy interacted in the community, he stated:

> *"I was the only black person around that area... I started to notice the way people look at me, I didn't like it…I didn't want to be part of them and I didn't want feel accepted in a sense..(I was) in my room for most of the time"*

Remy took an active, almost defiant choice to segregate himself from his foster family and the community he was in. Whilst Remy was better able to avoid his community, that was not possible at school. The racial difference in his foster family also led to a recognition of difference at school and noticing the influence his skin colour has on others:

> *"I started to notice these differences (racial differences) …I understand that I am black and I can see it the way I dress when I put on my hoodie I can see the way people look at you so"*

This experience of difference was also linked to being *"careful"* who he talked to and where he went. Finally, Remy shared an important connection to his life now as a care leaver. Describing it as *"hell"* he shared the sense of abandonment and isolation after leaving care stating *"you are pretty much by yourself at that point, after 25"*. Remy shared the following picture:

Figure 2: Picture shared by Remy when discussing life as a care leaver

In it he described an isolated world he now lives in, stating:

> *"it doesn't feel like a home, it doesn't feel welcoming it just feels like you have been dumped into a place and you are just there to find, make life easy for yourself as much as you can. So it doesn't feel like I belong here its even like when I moved into this flat it was pretty much empty there was nothing here and I had to slowly build everything from the ground up".*

Anita

Anita shared her sense of never experiencing belonging. She continued to describe herself as the *"opposite of belonging"* and of *"always feeling alone".* Similar to Remy, this sense of

feeling different was in part influenced by the racial difference with her foster family. Anita described how being of a different race made her *"stuck out"* stating:

> *"Well, it goes back to belonging doesn't it and if you don't belong and just stick out and people are looking at you and people are judging you."*

This awareness of racial difference led to a sense of feeling different, as with Remy, this sense of difference was reinforced by her interactions with her foster family. Anita shared her encounters of tackling the racial difference as she was put into a position to support her foster siblings racial understanding:

> *"like her kids went to a school where it was mostly White and like I used to make jokes and be like saying I am brown or whatever and she would say you are not brown you are black, like I am not black but like African - Caribbean people would define themselves as black, I am not black."*

The foster sister continued to tell Anita that she was black. Thus, reinforcing this sense of difference and feeling like the odd one out. This sense of difference was reinforced in the community. Of having to tackle comments made by members in the community. Anita shared that a shop assistant mistook her foster mother as her biological mother, her foster carers response was as follows:

> *"it felt so weird and I don't know it just felt really weird and I felt too different for her to be described as my mum. It felt like I was totally different to her"*

Whilst there was a lot of stigma associated with her care status, conversations on her care status were at times unavoidable because of the race differences between them. This also transferred into her experiences at school furthering a sense of isolation. In reflection on this racial difference, Anita spoke about feeling culturally isolated stating:

> *"I didn't have any sort of my culture around me and as well like I don't think my foster carer understood religion either which is kind of related to race in the sense".*

When attempts were made to experience a religious festival such as Eid, there was this reminder of how different it would be as it *"can't be replicated unless you're with a South Asian Muslim family"*. Unlike Remy, Anita had a desire to replicate cultural connections but similar to Remy she was isolated in making sense of it herself.

Priya

Priya also spoke openly about her sense of isolation during care. Whilst she did notice racial differences between her and her foster carer it was not her focus. Instead, Priya linked this isolation to difficulties in friendships, sharing:

> *"I didn't really have like a friend at school, I didn't really have any friends, I had people in my class and I had people messaging me…but you know I didn't really have a proper friendship really, and it was quite a lonely time"*

In part this may have been related to her physical health issues which led to several disruptions in school. However, for Priya, the attraction to relationships was not race/cultural related but a need for "*co-dependence*" which she described as follows:

> *"For me co-dependence is like validation, emotional validation erm verbal validation but kind of like not being able to make a decision on your own and feeling ok about it or making even small decisions like you are thinking what this person would think if they saw me doing this"*

Priya reflected on how she responds to isolation describing this realisation as "*I didn't feel safe and I didn't feel strong on my own*". Priya acknowledged the sense of difference with her care status. As somebody who continues to stay with her foster family, she spoke of navigating general office conversations which run the risk of potentially opening up conversations about her care status and ultimately leaving her to feel different:

> *"they would be like "did you get up to much?" and I would kind of keep it brief because I don't really want to go into the whole thing of like "oh yeah me and my foster family did this" or "me and my foster carer went out" because I feel like it will lead on to more conversation"*

Sarah

Sarah is mixed heritage. She openly spoke about this feeling of having to negotiate between her Pakistani culture and White Irish culture, but ultimately "*not fitting in*" to either. Sarah often described her foster carer as "*very White*" denoting to how disconnected her foster care was to Sarah's culture. Similar to Remy, she spoke about the monetary incentives of fostering which trumped a sense of being cared for and loved for who they were:

"it doesn't really matter how long you have been there or how good the relationship is there is still a social worker that comes and checks and they have to make notes and um there is still money involved, there is all of this stuff so I think like I was very aware that wasn't actually my family"

Sarah spoke openly about her feeling of disconnect from her Pakistani culture, starting with her name:

"Oh wouldn't it be nicer to have a name you know that was a bit more I don't know reflective of that cultural background as well"

There was this wish to "*contextualise*" her experiences. Whilst this led to seeking out a sense of belonging in attempting to find friends who were also Pakistani, she received a further rejection from that group, sharing when an individual stated:

"Absolutely not, I am not being friends with this White girl, why are you bringing her here... So negative towards me and so I think like so every time I slightly explored that side of my identity it's been like not necessarily received that well"

However, despite not fitting in with her own culture she continued to notice the difficulties that those from minority backgrounds often experience. This included having to explain to people how to pronounce her name and of her friends in school, but equally feeling isolated in this experience:

"every time the teacher like mispronounce his name it made me like cringe and it was like quite a few times like I think even though I wasn't friends with him I think oh that is just a nightmare, just ignore it or you know like try and reassure him a bit because like it was just so I don't know uncomfortable and I am not sure other people even picked up on it"

4.2 Systemic racism and the barriers to cultural connection

Contributing to a sense of isolation and disconnect from participants' care experience were conversations on the barriers to cultural connection experienced by both foster carers and professionals.

Remy

Remy spoke about the half-hearted attempts by his foster family to understand and support his culture:

> *"their conversation is not as free as when I am not there. I can tell they are holding back, umm, and the foods they were eating sometimes they would ask you do you want rice, you can have something different."*

Remy shared the importance of food in his culture but described these one-off moments where his foster family supported him in accessing it:

> "So they took me to a Nigerian restaurant to eat and for pretty much one day and I need to eat like this every day, not one day….*I just felt like they were putting like on a acting face its like they were just acting, nothing was genuine, nothing was real"*

Such experiences with his foster family were influenced by what he described as a bias system that tended to favour White children in care:

> *"when we talk about our experience and when they talk about their experiences it is very different and we were like yeah its very different like their houses are well planned, there is a plan for them to move, the house and everything is there. And even then they don't move them until they make sure everything is on point. Whilst me and her they moved us even when everything was a mess."*

Describing "*we*" as minority children in care versus "*them*" as White CIC. Remy continued to explain the issues he has experienced since having left care, including the lack of support in his transition, where he has been "*left to figure everything out*" as described in the previous theme. The absence of cultural receptivity from his foster family and professionals was evident in his reflection on speaking about his frustrations as he stated *"This is probably the first time I am actually talking about it (experiences of racial difference)".*

Anita

Anita also described this conflict with her foster carers and the professionals supporting her. She reflected on the lack of cultural receptivity by her foster carer. In discussing the

celebration of Eid she stated that her foster carer "*didn't really know much about it*" and concluded:

> *"I think it is weird because foster carers have to go through like so much vigorous training and it was really strange that she clearly hadn't been on any decent training about race because she didn't know anything. I find it weird"*

The importance of food was again explored with Anita, she stated:

> *"I asked my foster carer if she could cook like Indian food, but she never did, it was like when I was not in care, I pretty much only ate Indian food… it was quite a big difference in what I was eating"*

Anita had to advocate for her cultural needs. When opportunities arose they would be inconsistent e.g. having an Indian takeaway. This again brought about the sense of half-hearted attempts to satisfy her cultural needs, despite it being requested. In speaking about the professionals around her, Anita spoke about the barrier her social workers all being White which led to questions in her mind:

> *"they were all white and I think I don't know how much more training they've had but I don't know if they would be able to talk about my ethnicity or race or whatever. Because they don't fully understand it themselves"*

However, Anita suggested the importance of educating professionals and foster carers so that the responsibility isn't on the young person. She reflected on the value in giving young people choice and being actively interested in their culture:

> *"I mean someone can ask you like if you want to talk about it and if you are given that choice and also given that even if you say no you know that it is something people are willing to talk about to you about. But the thing is that all my social workers were White anyway"*

It was clear that the White social workers increased the sense of barriers that is felt to cultural receptivity felt by Anita. This placed further importance on White foster carers being culturally receptive, compared to ethnic minority social workers who may be perceived as more receptive.

Priya

Priya was less focused on the barriers related to the system to cultural receptivity. She reflected on noticing the visible differences between her and her foster family:

> *"I was a little bit kind of apprehensive, not apprehensive but anxious before I thought like I have never really lived with White people before like I thought are they going to, like how are they really going to take me and stuff"*

This apprehension was quickly dissolved with the first impressions. The responsibility was taken away from Priya to explain her dietary needs and discussed between her foster carer and social worker. For Priya, it felt that her foster carer has *"prepared for my arrival".* Priya spoke about how her foster carer had to take the initiative herself to support her cultural needs:

> *"Oh no, I rang my friend who is also a foster carer and she used to look after a lot of young people who eat halal so I kind of got to learn what I can do basically from her"*

She reflected on the *"massive learning curve"* for the foster family. Priya spoke about the mistakes services make in assuming the importance of ethnic matching. As she shared an experience with a Pakistani foster carer born in Kenya:

> *"I think although she was Kenyan, she didn't speak like the language I speak, my other languages and stuff so, I don't know she used to make some very strange food though, so I don't know that was a hard one"*

Importantly, the message here was on systems managing their racial and cultural assumptions. As Priya stated:

> *"Like two White people aren't going to see eye to eye on everything, two black people aren't going to see eye to eye on everything, two Polish people aren't going to see eye to eye on everything like two women aren't going to see eye to eye, two men won't see eye to eye"*

Instead, Priya focused on the cultural receptivity of the individual which could be achieved by any foster carer.

Sarah

In touching on this theme Sarah often described her foster carer as "*very White*", at one point stating "*she is 75 and she reads the Daily Mail..".* Denoting the barrier that her foster carers Whiteness had to feeling connected to her culture or bringing up conversations on her Pakistani heritage. Similar to Remy and Anita she described inconsistent attempts of cultural receptivity from her foster carer:

> *"I remember once and I don't know why it happened and it is just this really weird memory in my head because I guess I doesn't really fit with anything but at some point she took me to the west end…erm and there is a lot of kind of sari shops and bought me or I bought a red sari which I never wore"*

A recollection of a single memory of cultural connection but a lack of joint exploration from her foster carer and professionals around her was a theme for Sarah. Similar to Anita, Sarah stated *"all of my social workers were White",* She continued to link this as a barrier to speaking to professionals about her cultural needs:

> *"I never had like a relationship like with a professional where I could imagine them like ever having that kind of conversation with me if that makes sense"*

Sarah spoke about a system that is "*hugely based on racism"* when describing how professionals responded to her contact with her Pakistani heritage. She shared:

> *"nobody ever talked to me about it and nobody talked to me about it in more like an identity way…it was always a concern or a risk… oh maybe she would be forced into a marriage or maybe she will like be taken to Pakistan and won't be able to come back…"*

When conversations on her heritage were explored, her Pakistani side was seen in a negative way. Despite these experiences, there was this wish to understand her birth story, a way to *"contextualise my experiences a little bit".* There appeared to be a feeling that any connection to her culture and heritage was being *"intentionally blocked*" which was linked to a racial prejudice. Sarah reviewed her care files and found whilst no effort was made to reconnect her to her Pakistani culture because of risks, she was permitted to contact her stepdad from her White family despite him being "*very abusive*".

4.3 Choosing the pathway to belonging

The themes discussed explore issues related to how experiences in a White foster family have led to a sense of disconnection and isolation. Many of these experiences have been contextualised by the racial differences experienced by participants, but equally navigating the experience of living in a foster family. The following subthemes highlight how participants attempted to re-gain a sense of belonging and connection in their lives whilst in care and as care leavers.

4.4 Finding the 'little family'

Remy

Remy spoke about times in his life where he has experienced a sense of belonging. He shared his experiences in a residential home with other CIC:

> *"we didn't feel like different, we felt like we were all the same and we are all away from our family and we can all have the same ideas and we kind of felt like we had to support each other."*

Whilst he was the only black child, there were some black staff members. Remy spoke about feeling "*like I was part of something*" and that he had respect and choice to "d*o everything I wanted*", such as "*playing videogames; football and people to talk to every single day*". There was this sense from Remy that the combination of being with other CIC and the willingness of staff to listen to Remy and involve him in activities led to an experience of belonging. These experiences in some form transcended the racial differences as he stated "*I can be myself*".

Important to Remy were his experiences of school as he described feeling visible and appreciated:

> *"I did well while I was in school even to the point where they actually took a picture of me and put it on the schools website, and I am like wow so I really focused when I was at school…"I felt like I belonged there because all my hard work showed, they didn't all the hard work that I did, they praised me for all the hard work I had done."*

Despite the racial make-up of the school being "*95% White*", the school actively showed their appreciation. This experience of people actively showing their love and appreciation is what

brought about a sense of belonging for Remy. He appeared to reminisce about these experiences as he described it as a time when he was his *"true self".*

Anita

Similar to Remy, Anita spoke about her ability to access experiences of care and love from professionals. Struggling with mental health difficulties she spoke about being understood by a psychologist:

> *"I obviously saw psychologist every week and she was very important in aiding my recovery… I know obviously psychologists can't read minds but she erm she really, really knew… She helped me understand like if I reacted a certain way it was a response to like an attachment style"*

Anita also spoke about her social worker advocating for her to stay with her cats. Such moments were ways Anita connected to a sense of family roles where she was taken care of and supported. In the context of family, Anita also spoke about the importance of her cats, stating, *"I have lost all my foster siblings and stuff like that, but I've still got my cats".* Whilst she did not explicitly describe a sense of belonging to her cats, there appeared to be a sense of family and roles assigned with Anita taking the parent/carer role. For Anita, accessing memories of family felt important for her. When discussing belonging she spoke about her relationship with her foster carer, she shared the following picture and stated:

Figure 3: Picture shared by Anita as a memory of belonging with her foster carer

> *"it is the only tv show I have watched when I was in care and I still watch it now. I always used to watch Hollyoaks with my foster carer as well. Then I just continued watching it afterwards and yeah, I just think it is a sense of consistency."*

Anita also spoke about memories of family outings to the *"zoo or Sea life",* being included with family rituals (as identified in Chapter 1) appeared to be where an experience of belonging was felt. Finally, a sense of belonging was also experienced in relation to her belongings which remind her of important relationships and memories associated with that, some of which were painful.

> *"I've got a throw, like a blanket throw that me and my foster carer used to like sit together under… It is just in a basket somewhere, like I don't look at it because I don't want to"*

Priya

Priya spoke about the importance of friendships. She shared this changing perspective as she left care from wanting a "*big group of friends*" to accessing "*true friendship*" that avoided "*the big red flag of co-dependence*". A source of family was sought in her current job. Specifically, Priya spoke about the attraction of simulating family rituals with colleagues. This included sharing food during lunch time routines or having colleagues in mind:

> *"I had to move rooms and I have so much stuff, and I found two phone chargers …I had collected them and I was going to throw them in the bin and then I thought hang on one of the guys in the security team their phones might fit one"*

Priya spoke about friendships at work and feeling valued and cared for. As one colleague stated to her "*all we want is for you to look after yourself*" Priya connected this to her sense of isolation that she has felt in her life:

"that might sound really basic but I think it was just a reflection of how I suppose low I was feeling and how lonely I was feeling on the inside and that was the kind of verbal nature of things they would say like "as long as you're ok" and I suppose in a way I didn't really care about myself so it was nice for someone to care about me"

As Priya was finding opportunities for a "*family*" she reflected on wanting to "*make a bit of effort*" as she could distinguish "*genuine people*":

> *"I don't know um, this probably will sound a bit sad to be honest with you but to be honest outside of that where I found belonging like I suppose if you look at work*

now and at the moment with the security guards, I actually feel like in some ways more of a family to me"

Priya found opportunities to re-create a sense of family and connection. Accessing and investing in these friendships gave opportunities to socialise further as one of her friends asked her to come to a BBQ, responding with "*Bloody hell yeah I'll come*". Priya summarised the experience by acknowledging the importance of everyday family rituals which did not necessarily have to be experienced within a biological or foster family:

"It is just like these little things that we didn't do during lockdown, these are now very small things that like we are probably not thinking twice about doing but these interactions are actually quite huge"

Sarah

Sarah often spoke about creating the "*little family*", associating this with the connection she has to her siblings. An important symbolic but meaningful way of creating a sense of family was through having the same surname. Sarah spoke about her process of seeking a surname by scanning "*gravestones*" but eventually finding one that created a *"unified kind of exclusive name"* with her siblings.

After having left care Sarah found ways to access her community, to create opportunities of family, similar to what she has experienced with her siblings. She described this experience of wanting to be a part of something bigger:

"as I moved here, I was looking at um you know what kind of community projects there were and how to be involved… I want to be a part of the community as opposed to just living in this house"

Sarah made choices to get involved with community projects, she chose to interact with those around her and bring about opportunities to connect and grow her family.

"I think in a way I was interested in like feeling like part of something bigger like because it was just the 4 of us, like we don't have Aunties or have any contact with Aunties or Uncles, Nieces, Nephews, Grandparents, anything like that it was just us"

Her efforts seemed to reinforce an experience of family, during the interview she shared pictures of community projects which made her feel included and cared for:

> *"they kind of very much included me and even though I was relatively new to it they really talked me through like the conference and shared lots of things with me which was really nice, it made me feel like really part of the group"*

The opportunity to make these choices and find opportunities for family was reinforced by the giving nature of those around her. This led to a shift in her experience of belonging:

> *"I think maybe the definition has shifted but also like how much I felt I belonged has shifted if that makes sense, so maybe viewing it more as a thing that I was like "Oh I don't necessary feel like I belong in these space" to "Oh I feel like I do belong in this space. So, my idea of what belonging was hasn't necessarily changed that much but my experience of how much I fit in to like belonging has changed over time"*

4.5 An attraction to diversity

All participants found new experiences of family and connection whilst in care and having left care, these experiences differed in how and in what context these relationships were sought. However, a commonality between all participants was an attraction to diverse populations.

Remy

Remy reflected on a wish to be heard and given a choice, sharing "*I want to be a part of something*". Remy shared that the racial difference with his foster family prompted an awareness of racial difference in his school:

> *"I was more slowly starting to talk to guys that was the same colour as my skin, I was not really talking to like I said you could see the difference between the groups when they were hanging around with each other, during lunch, the table that they sit, I started to notice the difference so sitting with guys that were my race or mixed and yeah so I started to separate myself in a sense."*

There was a recognition of wanting to access those that reflected his skin colour. However, in discussing his experiences Remy shared that for him it was important to experience diverse populations:

"I am more comfortable when I can see Asians, I can see White, I can see Black, I can see everyone there. I feel more comfortable there because I see it as more welcoming……Although when I go to places and I just see one race, even when I see just black people I don't really feel, I want to be in a place where there are different cultures."

Instead, there was an attraction to diversity and that this felt more important that experiencing just one race. This was a factor that encouraged Remy to travel 50 minutes each day to stay in this school.

Anita

Anita also shared experiences during care of having friends that are *"all different":*

"I used to hang around with different races, I mean I hanged around with people who are South Asian, I hanged around with people who are White, I had a Filipino friend. Yeah, school was alright in terms of cultural diversity, I didn't feel bad about it"

This again was different to life in her foster home as she lived in a White community and a White family.

Priya

Whilst Priya reflected on a fascination for diversity both in care and as a care leaver:

"I think I sometimes find myself like when I am out and about and you see someone and sometimes you know heritage and things can be quite obvious by looking at a person and sometimes you think I wonder where they are from and nothing untoward just general human I suppose fascination really or intriguing I suppose"

Whilst in care she spoke about foster sibling who was also Pakistani. This experience gave Priya an opportunity to have culture-specific conversations that would not have been accessed through her White foster carer:

"I think both kind of being, having the experience of living with a white foster family and being Pakistani, we have like little jokes and you know we speak the same languages and stuff, we talk about Bollywood movies and you know and films and stuff…I am so glad like I have got her in my life. She understands me on levels that some people don't necessarily always"

Whilst living in a predominantly White foster family and community Priya shared that her school was "*95% Muslim Pakistani*" which provided exposure to her culture. This felt important however it was not discussed or explored further.

Sarah

Sarah was the most active in seeking diversity. Whilst in care Sarah spoke about finding the only minority children at her school and becoming friends with them. She found ways to expose herself to different cultures through her friends. This included going to her friend's Diwali celebrations even though she did not celebrate the festival, or spending time at another friend's home to eat their cultural food. Sarah spoke about moving to a diverse school and the opportunities this brought to her life such as learning new languages:

> *"I don't know you could do all kinds of language classes for example like they had evening classes in like loads of different languages so I did like some Bengali and I did some Arabic things like that"*

Similar to the other participants there was this attraction to diversity rather than an interest in solely her Pakistani culture:

> *"I definitely would have been interested because I was interested in the world like I would have wanted to know more and if I met people who were Pakistani I would ask about like where abouts they were from and the language and all that kind of stuff so I had that curiosity but to be honest if someone was to talk to me about like Somali culture I probably would be really interested there"*

In the interview Sarah shared a picture of a group of non-White women enjoying a picnic together. Sarah facilitates several community-based projects that seek to bring together people from the community which consist of mainly ethnic minorities. Re-creating family rituals appeared important, including having a "*WhatsApp group*" and being "*part of the culture in a way that isn't weird if that makes sense*". In part, this was encouraged by the women in the group, sharing food and agriculture ideas, but also Sarah's willingness to bridge the gaps by creating a space to meet and learning Arabic or Urdu to start a dialogue. Much like a family would. More specifically, in attempting to understand her attraction to diverse populations Sarah shared the following:

"I have always, maybe it is that kind of um like gap in my own kind of cultural history or whatever like I think I have always kind of tried to make like connections with people who aren't White, I probably like made more of an effort too"

It is possible that in part this was related to being deprived herself of any cultural connection, experiencing Whiteness as the majority race for most of her life.

4.6 Access and connection to birth family culture

Remy

Remy shared that he calls his mum regularly. As part of his heritage, he has a lineage of kings. His responsibility is often reminded to him by his family:

"one day you are going to be the king, one day you're going to be this or that you're going to take over your father so it is always there since I was a child, pictures all around the house and everything its always something that they keep telling me over and over again"

As a care leaver Remy chooses how he interacts with his own culture. He related to the responsibility to be King as a pressure and spoke openly about how he chooses to respond to it:

"I don't want to be a king if I am not going to change something, what's the point, I don't want to be king of a place where people are suffering. I will probably try and remove and you know separate myself"

This also led to how he interacts with his name which is a reminder of his lineage. Remy shares the importance of his values in determining how he chooses to interact with his culture. It is through choosing how he interacts with his culture that gives a sense of control and therefore, opportunity. Remy shared that apart from the residential home he does not experience a sense of belonging:

"when I was in the care home I felt like I belonged, but now I don't really, I have never felt like I belonged anywhere, like even in my own flat, I don't feel like I belonged here so it's been yeah, I've never, yeah, even now I have been thinking about saving up money and going back to Nigeria for a couple months and just going back to my own town. I am

planning to do that next year, because I don't feel like I belong, I just (don't) feel like I am a part of anything"

A drive to wanting to belong, but feeling isolation has driven Remy to travel to Nigeria to seek connection and a sense of belonging, despite his aspirations for his current job in the UK. This indicates the importance for Remy to experience a sense of belonging and connection which he cannot find in his life in the UK.

Anita

Anita did not explore her birth family stories/culture as much during the interview. Whilst in care she spoke of being able to access cultural scripts that were important in framing her understanding of festivals such as Eid:

"The way I used to celebrate Eid was to make loads of nice food and go round to people's houses and it is like you just can't replicate it no matter what unless you are a South Asian Muslim family, there is no way you can possibly re-enact Eid."

Anita shared her memories of growing up in a Muslim family before foster care. She spoke of the Arabic meaning behind her name. As a care leaver Anita shared "*I am not Muslim anymore*" providing an example as to how she interacts with her culture and her religion now.

In addition to Remy's experience, after leaving care, Anita spoke about her attraction to travelling which was enabled by having her own income. In particular, Anita used this sense of agency to facilitate her search to understand more about her own culture:

"I went to India twice. I had felt like I had a bit more understanding of my culture, but I would never be able to go back and see my dad's family there because of just stuff but it is weird because I won't get to go back and experience what it is like. A lot of it I didn't like at the time, but now reflecting back on it, it's a cultural thing"

The ability to choose how she would want to interact with her culture led to the opportunity to change her relationship/perspective with her culture, describing it as a "*cultural thing*".

Priya

Speaking about the meaning of her name, Priya shared a detailed understanding of the story behind the meaning and process her parents took to choose her name:

"I was named it because they was running out of time and then um actually no I think they had an argument of what they were going to name me, yeah I have heard my dad's version and if you knew my dad you would know it is probably the most accurate"

Priya spoke of the religious meaning behind her name and linked it back to how she relates to herself feeling that her name is "*quite fitting really*". Priya had access to her mum whilst she was in care and has contact now as a care leaver. Such experiences maintain the thread Priya has with her birth stories but equally permits her to choose how and when she interacts with them.

Sarah

As mentioned above Sarah has an interest in her culture and a desire to engage with it. She spoke of her father's sister who she liked and was "*desperate*" to have a connection with. Different to other participants Sarah had limited access to the Pakistani side of her family. Therefore, she had to find ways to interact with her Pakistani culture. This became more accessible as a care leaver. Similar to Anita, Sarah found herself travelling to India and although unable to get a visa to go to Pakistan she went to the border, possibly to get as close as possible. She spoke about the role of money in supporting this decision which gave her the option to access her culture. This freedom seemed to bring about opportunities to also explore other cultures:

"the fact I actually have some money for once in my life like where do I want to go, that was the first place I always thought, like I really wanted to go to Thailand you know I really wanted to go to South America"

Unlike other participants, Sarah also reflected on the difficulties her nieces and nephew would experience should they choose to explore and connect with their Pakistani heritage. Therefore, it was important for Sarah to support her family members to embrace their "*culture mosaic*", thus avoiding the experiences she has where she was deprived of her culture and made to make sense of it by herself:

"I would quite like my nieces and nephew to have an understanding as they grow up that they are part of this culture mosaic you know like with my mum birth family being Irish and um and you know with my dad's family being Pakistani but also Turkish and you know they are this broad you know spectrum of backgrounds and that

is something that is like exciting or should be exciting for them and should be able to access"

3.5 Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of belonging and difference for non-White ethnic minority care leavers who have experienced a placement with a family of a different race and/or ethnicity to them.

5.1 Summary of findings

The findings reflect some of the processes of acculturation as outlined by Berry's (1997) biodimensional model. Specifically, what brought participants together was how they experienced in their own way a sense of isolation and disconnection from their foster family, community or in school. Whilst in part this related to being in care, it was also contextualised by a process of 'ethnicization'. This is where participants marked their racial and cultural background as different in relation to their dominant White foster family (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). A common experience by most participants was the absence of cultural receptivity from both their foster family and professionals involved. Some participants spoke about a "racist" system which encouraged a sense of difference. In all cases, the participants found ways to access experiences of belonging and connection during care and as care leavers. This included re-defining their family system, finding opportunities to connect with diversity and importantly choosing how they interact with their own culture.

5.2 The odd one out

The theme highlights participants' experiences of feeling isolated and abandoned by their foster carers and professionals. An important part of this process was participants not feeling like they belonged to their families. This is a similar experience for many CIC experienced in chapter 1 of this thesis. However, the process of not belonging was further complicated by the racial differences between participants and their foster family and the community they lived in. As Remy described how he *"could really see the colour of my skin more*" which compounded a sense of difference and being the odd one out.

Previous work has demonstrated that racial and/or cultural differences can lead to a range of difficulties for CIC. This includes being bothered by strangers' stares or questions regarding

how CIC are related to their foster parents (Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003; Samuels, 2009). Stigma related to the disclosure of care status has been discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Whilst for the most part sharing their care status can often be a choice made by the young person, this is not the case for transracial placements. For example, Anita spoke of her worry of meeting friends out in the community who may notice the racial difference between her and her foster family. Such experiences served to compromise her care status without her consent and increase the feeling of being different from her family.

5.3 "*Racism*" (Sarah) in the system

An important facilitator of difference for three out of four participants was the lack of cultural receptivity by their foster parents and the professionals surrounding them. Participants spoke about Whiteness as a barrier to cultural receptivity, with some describing their social workers as "very White". Two participants spoke of the discrimination they experience because of their race and cultural background. Barn (2010) is one of a limited number of UK-based papers exploring the experiences of minority care leavers. An important reflection from this research was a recognition of the 'White norm'. This suggests that White people are not required to think about their position in society and therefore do not need to explore racial and cultural questions of "where do I belong?".

NICE (2021) guidance has stated the importance of *"recognising groups that may face additional disadvantage and ensuring they do not face further marginalisation"*. One of these groups include 'Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic groups' (BAME). Importantly, individuals may experience various forms of inequality that intersect and can operate to exacerbate each other (Crenshaw, 1989). Participants spoke in relation to being care experienced and non-White. Some participants sought to differentiate themselves from White CIC and suggested that non-White CIC are often treated less favourably. Similar findings have been presented by Waddell (2022) who looked at the cultural response for ethnic minority children and families. Additionally, in a survey to better understand the nature of racism in social work, 31% reported witnessing racism towards service users/families by colleagues or managers (What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, 2022).

Having said this, as some participants reflected that whilst having more non-White professionals did feel important, it was not always a recipe for success. Instead, what felt important was finding ways foster carers and systems could take responsibility to be culturally

receptive and show interest consistently throughout the placement and not just at the beginning.

5.4 Finding the "little family"

Whilst most participants spoke about feeling isolated and separate from their foster family, this research presented ways participants used agency to access a sense of belonging whilst in care and as care leavers. An important outcome from fostering has been to support care experienced people to have a voice and to identify what is important to them so that they can influence their own care (NSPCC, 2022). Whilst it was often difficult for participants in this study to influence their own care with their foster family, it was clear that school was an important space where they were able to make choices.

Driscoll (2011) spoke about the importance of school as a space where children can detach themselves from their looked after status. Schools are a place where CIC can widen their network and resources for connection (Schofield, 2002). Participants in this study spoke about the importance of school, siblings and community groups after leaving care, which contributed to ways they accessed their "little family". However, for all participants there was an attraction to racially and culturally diverse friendship groups. In all occasions, this attraction to racial diversity often satisfied a specific need to connect with people from participants' own culture. A possible reason for this may be related to the social construction of "Whiteness" being the social norm (Guess, 2006). For most participants, Whiteness was the dominant racial group in their foster family, their community and their school. Therefore, anything different to that dominant group became the "other" which included themselves.

Similar to the findings in Chapter 1, Important to the process of creating a sense of belonging was how participants related to their birth culture/history. Knowing where we have come from is an important part of making sense of ourselves. For many people in care, memories about the past are often unavailable (Access to Records Campaign Group, 2016). In 2014, the Department for Education amended guidance to require local authorities to support care leavers to access their records. Research has suggested that accessing birth family is a lot more difficult for ethnic minority children (Kirton, Peltier & Webb, 2001). For participants in this study, it was not always possible to access records related to their culture and family history. Many participants chose to access their stories as care leavers which included travelling to their birth family's country of origin. Additionally, as care leavers, participants also chose

which parts of their culture they wanted to connect with. For example, Remy wanted to go to Nigeria to connect with his culture but did not want to take up his position as King.

5.5 Clinical implications

1. A shift from ethnic matching

As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, what felt important from the participants in this research was a wish to be a part of foster family rituals. Remy wanted to be taken to the cinema with his foster family. Anita recalled being taken to the zoo/London with her foster family and described these moments as the only times she felt like she belonged in the family. However, it is also important for CIC to express their own identity to experience a sense of belonging (Sporton & Valentine, 2007). For participants in this research, in addition to being included in family rituals, that also meant taking into account their cultural needs. An important reflection coming from this research is on the assumption of the importance of ethnic matching. Participants in this review suggested that ethnic matching is not always a solution. As Priya shared, living with a Pakistani carer born in Kenya was not supportive of her cultural development. A reflection made by the majority of participants was the experience of their cultural needs being supported inconsistently throughout their placement stay. For example, Remy spoke of being taken to a Nigerian restaurant only once but stating that he needed Nigerian food every day. Instead, for many participants their focus was on how foster carers and professionals could be consistently culturally receptive and that this can be achieved in transracial placements, as found by Priya in this study.

2. A Measure of cultural receptivity

A method of exploring foster parents' cultural receptivity could be through using assessment tools that reliably measure such concepts. An example of this is the Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale (CRFS – see Appendix 2O). An example question includes whether foster mother/father is "Finding out about the skin and hair care that are best for a foster child" (Coakley & Orme, 2006). The assessment would aim to empower foster carers and social workers to feel equipped to discuss difficult topics such as race and culture from the beginning of a placement, and it can be reviewed consistently during placement. Depending on the demand, it would be suggested that services can start to think about appropriate training.

However, the literature has suggested that there is a lack of resources in this area (Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003). Of what is available, Montgomery (2020) explored the effectiveness of a 3-hour culturally competent parenting (CCP) programme delivered to foster carers in the United States. The aim of the training was to increase parents' cultural receptivity and promote culturally competent practices. An outcome from this training led to increased scores in parents' openness towards cultural receptivity, or effort to practice culturally competent parenting. The researchers concluded on the importance of "ongoing and consistent" training about race, ethnicity and cultural socialisation. This places responsibilities back on foster carers and professionals involved to actively engage with their foster child's culture, rather than the responsibility falling on the CIC to raise their needs as found in the current study.

5.6 Limitations

1. Hearing the voices of children currently in care

In a review of the fostering system in England, of studies that reported participant ethnicity, the predominant responses were from White children (Baginsk, Gorin & Sands 2017). The review concluded that there is an 'urgent need' for the views and experiences of ethnic minority children and young people to be sought and better understood. This is considerably more important for adolescents as this is when a heightened awareness of racial difference and increased likelihood for racial discrimination begins (Fisher, Wallace & Fenton, 2000; Greene, Way & Pahl, 2006; Cross & Cross, 2008).

Therefore, the present study was originally designed to examine the experiences of non-White CIC currently in a placement with a White foster family. The lead author developed key relationships in looked after children services, including those in senior management levels. Whilst young people who fit the inclusion criteria were identified, the project had to be abandoned due the difficulties in recruitment. This was despite suitable young people having been identified as suitable for the research. In conversations with allies in the services, it was felt that racism was a factor that impacted this research, including how uncomfortable professionals felt about having and being supported with conversations on race and difference with the young person. These systemic blocks were also felt by the researcher, as whilst the researcher consistently met with individuals from senior positions to discuss the research they were ultimately left struggling to access support when it came to accessing participants. In addition to systemic racism present, this research was conducted during the COVID-19

pandemic. It is possible that services were stretched during this time and therefore struggled to support this project.

Therefore, the current study focused on the experiences of adult care leavers. Whilst this study has presented valuable findings, the results are based on retrospective accounts. Such accounts can be impacted by memory distortions or other biases. Furthermore, care leavers willing to participate in research on the present topic represent a group of people likely to be defined by particular characteristics that would not necessarily be present for children still in care. Considering this, the concern here is that guidelines for best practice are presented without hearing the voice of the non-White young people currently experiencing transracial placements. Therefore, an important direction for research is exploring the experiences of non-White children currently in care.

2. The dominance of Whiteness

Another limitation of this research was the author's use of non-White to describe all people who are not the dominant race of Whiteness. This was related to how the author conceptualises their experiences as a British Indian. Whilst terms such as 'BAME' are available, the author did not feel comfortable with using an acronym to categorise people of colour**.** The term 'ethnic minority' would also include White minorities such as Gypsy populations, moving away from the focus on racial differences. The use of 'non-White' as a descriptive term can 'other' those who do not fit into the category of Whiteness, the term also reinforces the power dominance where Whiteness is seen as superior (Metcalfe, 2022). However, the term non-White reflected the experience of participants in this study. One where participants are dominated by Whiteness within the family, the community and for some at school. In feeling 'othered' they sought to indiscriminately access people from non-White backgrounds.

An additional issue in using the term non-White was that a participant who was mixed-heritage was not sure whether they could participate in the project. Therefore, the project could have unintentionally left some individuals feel they could not participate.

3. Sample size

The study only recruited four participants. Although the sample size did adhere to IPA as recommended by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), as with all qualitative studies, it is

important to think about the generalisability of the findings. Importantly, all participants presented rich data which when carefully analysed developed narratives that highlighted important clinical implications such as the presence of systemic racism. Additionally, many of the results from this project align closely with the findings from the review section of this thesis. This included results from 258 participants supporting the transferability of results. This includes the importance of family rituals, access to the young person's birth family stories and navigating stigma and difference. The current study adds to this by thinking about care experiences when compounded by racial and cultural differences. Specifically, how participants navigated their differences and how systems responded.

5.7 Conclusion

Overall, the findings add to the limited research conducted in the UK on transracial fostering. The findings reflect the processes people take in integrating into two cultures as identified in Berry's (1997) biodimentional model of acculturation. However, they provide further evidence of the difficulties CIC face in attempting to do so whilst in care and as care leavers. Ultimately, more work is needed to explore how children currently in care and care leavers process their experiences. The aim would be to continue building the narrative around the importance of consistent cultural receptivity and culturally competent fostering. Such processes can help to integrate important parts of a foster child's identity which is often fractured, sometimes itself an outcome of being in care.

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Chapter 3：Public dissemination document for the meta-ethnography

We all just want to belong

Having a sense of belonging is important to our emotional wellbeing (Bowlby, 1969). The consequences of not feeling like you belong can lead to a sense of isolation (Dorling et al. 2008). Achieving a sense of belonging is difficult for those who are in care. When moving to a new placement, they can often lose their family, their friends and community all in one go (Barn, 2010). It is vital that professionals and carers understand ways to support those in care to feel a sense of belonging.

A new meta-ethnography produced by the University of Birmingham is the first of its kind to bring together the current research in the UK that explores the factors that are important to belonging for those who are fostered or adopted. The review compared 12 papers, all originating in the UK. All participants included were either fostered, adopted or had now left care. The papers used several different qualitative analysis techniques which produced important findings to be considered.

Importantly, belonging was most felt when families and professionals thought carefully about the child's role and position in the family. This involved families explicitly thinking about how they would like to be addressed as foster parents, and involving the young person with every day family traditions. This included making space for them on the dinner table, hanging their picture on the wall or being taken on family outings, to name a few.

The review also highlighted the importance of the first moments of starting a new placement and then leaving. Participants spoke of their memories of feeling welcomed and a

part of the family, of having a space to call ‘home’ and then the opportunity to contact the family when they had left care.

Finally, this review reminds the reader that whilst people in care are looking to be accepted and belong, they are also managing the stigma related to their care status. Many spoke about the secret of being in care, of wanting to be “normal” but recognising that they are different and have a sense of belonging to their past. Importantly, this review suggests that if professionals and carers were to give emotional space to these stories, and jointly explore the meaning behind a care experience label, this can encourage those in care to integrate their whole self into their family, their school and community.

It was concluded that having a sense of belonging is important for young people in care. The review highlights the value of everyday practical and structured ways of strengthening the individual’s presence in the family unit and surrounding system to promote a sense of belonging. Future research in the UK should ensure that the voices of those in care are not lost when exploring their needs.

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Chapter 3 : Public dissemination document for the empirical paper

"not really being a part of the family was when I could really see the colour of my skin more"

We can't treat non-White children in care the same as their White counterparts. non-White young people in care are asked to navigate the additional impact of racism and discrimination by the systems that support them according to new research from the University of Birmingham. The current study is one of a limited number of UK studies in transracial fostering – placement of children in care in families that are racially and ethnically different to them (Johnson et al. 2013).

In the study, the researcher interviewed four non-White adult care leavers into their experiences of living with a White foster family. Using pictures to support, the interview focused on their experiences of belonging and difference. The questions covered their experiences in the family, at school and in their community. Importantly there was an understanding of how they make sense of their world now as care leavers.

The results showed that non-White children in care are often asked to make sense of their racial differences to their family alone. Whilst at times there may be a drive at the beginning for foster carers and professionals to be culturally receptive, it is often short lived. Participants spoke about feeling like the odd one out, and of having to navigate their racial differences in the community, their school and in their foster family alone. One participant described the system as being "*hugely based on racism"*, many echoed the need for further training about race and difference for foster carers and professionals

Whilst most participants spoke about feeling isolated and separate from their foster family, this research presented ways participants accessed a sense of belonging. Although there were challenges, all participants spoke about how they accessed racially diverse friendships and

continued to seek this once they had left care. During care, school was an important place for making diverse friendships. As care leavers, participants spoke about having money and choice which helped them to access different cultures. This included choosing the communities they wanted to live in, and travelling to their country of origin in a bid to connect to their cultural stories.

Lead author Sarjan, explained:

> *"It was interesting to see that despite most participant experiences of feeling disconnected from their foster family linked to noticing their racial differences, all found themselves attracted to racially and culturally diverse populations. It was powerful to see how participants navigated the intersections of being a child in care and being non-White. This review does not indicate that transracial fostering does not work, instead it highlights the importance of services investing in developing the cultural receptivity of professionals and foster carers and an urgent need to hear the voices of ethnic minority children and young people"*.

3.2 References

Johnson, F. L., Mickelson, S., & Davila, M. L. (2013). Transracial foster care and adoption: Issues and realities. *New England Journal of Public Policy*, *25*(1), 5.

CHAPTER 1 APPENDICES

2.1 Appendix 1A: Example of discussions between reviewers

Title discussed as it was included by Sarjan	Reason for discussing (e.g. not all members included title) – relating it back to the inclusion criteria	Outcome (Included or not excluded) Consensus achieved?
A shared experience of fragmentation: Making sense of foster placement breakdown	**Sarjan:** Yes for now: People within foster / experienced foster care - placement breakdown may relate to loss and so belonging Exclusion : placement breakdown, not mention of belonging **Reviewer 1:** Said no: Focused on foster carers + social workers / stakeholders' views of placement breakdown / unsure if it explored belonging at all	Take to Full-Text level in order to determine how much data is from the looked-after children themselves – determined as more than 50%.
Experiences of transitional youth who have received therapy in the foster care system	**Sarjan:** Yes for now: People experienced foster care / currently in care / some exploration of family Exclusion: focus on mental health / diagnostic **Reviewer 2:** more on mental health + welfare than belonging **Reviewer 1:** focuses on youth experiences of therapy within therapy / no exploration of belonging	**Exclude**: over focus on mental health
Identity formation in adolescents who live in foster care: Biographical narrative interpretive analysis	**Reviewer 2:** Focus on relationships	**Include**
Psychosocial Needs of Children in Foster Care and the Impact of Sexual Abuse	**Reviewer 2:** doesn't discuss belonging **Sarjan:** belonging after sexual abuse	**Exclude**
Siblings in foster care	**Reviewer 1:** Does not explore belonging **Reviewer 2:** mentions Latin American	**Exclude**
The first three years after foster care: A longitudinal look at the adaptation of 16	**Reviewer 1:** explores connectedness as engagement with adult world rather than belonging	**Include**

youth to emerging adulthood	**Sarjan :** explores support systems - related to relationships	
The well-being and risk behaviors of young adults from foster care	**Sarjan:** focuses on substance misuse + risky behaviours Mentions relationships and emotional connection with the foster family **Reviewer 1:** was unsure if the	**Include**
Troubling Meanings of "Family" for Young People Who Have Been in Care: From Policy to Lived Experience	**Reviewer 1:** not UK-based - mentions European data	**Include**
Young care leavers' expectations of their future: A question of time horizon		**Include**

2.2 Appendix 1B: NICE quality appraisal checklist for qualitative studies

Study identification: Include author, title, reference, year of publication		
Guidance topic:	**Key research question/aim:**	
Checklist completed by:		
Theoretical approach		
1. Is a qualitative approach appropriate? For example: • Does the research question seek to understand processes or structures, or illuminate subjective experiences or meanings? • Could a quantitative approach better have addressed the research question?	Appropriate Inappropriate Not sure	Comments:
2. Is the study clear in what it seeks to do? For example: • Is the purpose of the study discussed – aims/objectives/research question/s? • Is there adequate/appropriate reference to the literature? • Are underpinning values/assumptions/theory discussed?	Clear Unclear Mixed	Comments:
Study design		

3. How defensible/rigorous is the research design/methodology? For example: • Is the design appropriate to the research question? • Is a rationale given for using a qualitative approach? • Are there clear accounts of the rationale/justification for the sampling, data collection and data analysis techniques used? • Is the selection of cases/sampling strategy theoretically justified?	Defensible Indefensible Not sure	Comments:
Data collection		
4. How well was the data collection carried out? For example: • Are the data collection methods clearly described? • Were the appropriate data collected to address the research question? • Was the data collection and record keeping systematic?	Appropriately Inappropriately Not sure/inadequately reported	Comments:
Trustworthiness		
5. Is the role of the researcher clearly described? For example:	Clearly described Unclear	Comments:

• Has the relationship between the researcher and the participants been adequately considered? • Does the paper describe how the research was explained and presented to the participants?	Not described	
6. Is the context clearly described? For example: • Are the characteristics of the participants and settings clearly defined? • Were observations made in a sufficient variety of circumstances • Was context bias considered	Clear Unclear Not sure	Comments:
7. Were the methods reliable? For example: • Was data collected by more than 1 method? • Is there justification for triangulation, or for not triangulating? • Do the methods investigate what they claim to?	Reliable Unreliable Not sure	Comments:
Analysis		
8. Is the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? For example:	Rigorous Not rigorous Not sure/not reported	Comments:

• Is the procedure explicit – i.e. is it clear how the data was analysed to arrive at the results? • How systematic is the analysis, is the procedure reliable/dependable? • Is it clear how the themes and concepts were derived from the data?		
9. Is the data 'rich'? For example: • How well are the contexts of the data described? • Has the diversity of perspective and content been explored? • How well has the detail and depth been demonstrated? • Are responses compared and contrasted across groups/sites?	Rich Poor Not sure/not reported	Comments:
10. Is the analysis reliable? For example: • Did more than 1 researcher theme and code transcripts/data? • If so, how were differences resolved? • Did participants feed back on the transcripts/data if possible and relevant? • Were negative/discrepant results addressed or ignored?	Reliable Unreliable Not sure/not reported	Comments:

11. Are the findings convincing? For example: • Are the findings clearly presented? • Are the findings internally coherent? • Are extracts from the original data included? • Are the data appropriately referenced? • Is the reporting clear and coherent?	Convincing Not convincing Not sure	Comments:
12. Are the findings relevant to the aims of the study?	Relevant Irrelevant Partially relevant	Comments:
13. Conclusions For example: • How clear are the links between data, interpretation and conclusions? • Are the conclusions plausible and coherent? • Have alternative explanations been explored and discounted? • Does this enhance understanding of the research topic? • Are the implications of the research clearly defined? **Is there adequate discussion of any limitations encountered?**	Adequate Inadequate Not sure	Comments:
Ethics		

14. How clear and coherent is the reporting of ethics? For example: • Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? • Are they adequately discussed e.g. do they address consent and anonymity? • Have the consequences of the research been considered i.e. raising expectations, changing behaviour? • Was the study approved by an ethics committee?	Appropriate Inappropriate Not sure/not reported	Comments:
Overall assessment		
As far as can be ascertained from the paper, how well was the study conducted? (see guidance notes)	++ + –	Comments:

Section 1: theoretical approach

This section deals with the underlying theory and principles applied to the research.

1. Is a qualitative approach appropriate?

A qualitative approach can be judged to be appropriate when the research sets out to investigate phenomena which are not easy to accurately quantify or measure, or where such measurement would be arbitrary and inexact. If clear numerical measures could reasonably have been put in place then consider whether a quantitative approach may have been more appropriate. This is because most qualitative research seeks to explain the meanings which social actors use in their everyday lives rather than the meanings which the researchers bring to the situation.

Qualitative research in public health commonly measures:

- personal/lives experiences (for example, of a condition, treatment, situation)

- processes (for example, action research, practitioner/patient views on the acceptability of using new technology)
- personal meanings (for example, about death, birth, disability)
- interactions/relationships (for example, the quality of the GP/patient relationship, the openness of a psychotherapeutic relationship)
- service evaluations (for example, what was good/bad about patients experiences of a smoking cessation group).

2. Is the study clear in what it seeks to do?

Qualitative research designs tend to be theory generative rather than theory testing; therefore it is unlikely that a research question will be found in the form of a hypothesis or null hypothesis in the way that you would expect in conventional quantitative research. This does not mean however that the paper should not set out early and clearly what it is that the study is investigating and what the parameters are for that. The research question should be set in context by the provision of an adequate summary of the background literature and of the study's underpinning values and assumptions.

Section 2: study design

Considers the robustness of the design of the research project.

3. How defensible is the research design?

There are a large number of qualitative methodologies, and a tendency in health to 'mix' aspects of different methodologies or to use a generic qualitative method. From a qualitative perspective, none of this compromises the quality of a study as long as:

- The research design captures appropriate data and has an appropriate plan of analysis for the subject under investigation. There should be a clear and reasonable justification for the methods chosen.
- The choice of sample and sampling method should be clearly set out, (ideally including any shortcomings of the sample) and should be reasonable. It is important to remember that sampling in qualitative research can be purposive and should not be random. Qualitative research is not experimental, does not purport to be generalisable, and therefore does not require a large or random sample. People are usually 'chosen' for qualitative research based on being key informers.

Section 3: data collection

4. How well was the data collection carried out?

Were the method of data collection the most appropriate given the aims of the research? Was the data collection robust, are there details of:

- how the data were collected?
- how the data were recorded and transcribed (if verbal data)?
- how the data were stored?
- what records were kept of the data collection?

Section 4: trustworthiness

Assessing the validity of qualitative research is very different from quantitative research. Qualitative research is much more focused on demonstrating the causes of bias rather than eliminating them, as a result it is good practice to include sections in the report about the reflexive position of the researcher (what was their 'part' in the research?), about the context in which the research was conducted, and about the reliability of the data themselves.

5. Is the role of the researcher clearly described?

The researcher should have considered their role in the research either as reader, interviewer, or observer for example. This is often referred to as 'reflexivity'. It is important that we can determine: a clear audit trail from respondent all the way through to reporting, why the author reported what they did report, and that we can follow the reasoning from the data to the final analysis or theory.

The 'status' of the researcher can profoundly affect the data, for example, a middle aged woman and a young adult male are likely to get different responses to questions about sexual activity if they interview a group of teenage boys. It is important to consider age, gender, ethnicity, 'insider' status (where the interviewer/researcher is part of the group being researched or has the same condition/illness, for example). The researcher can also profoundly influence the data by use of questions, opinions and judgments, so it is important to know what the researchers' position is in that regard and how the researcher introduced and talked about the research with the participants.

6. Is the context clearly described?

It is important when gauging the validity of qualitative data to engage with the data in a meaningful way, and to consider whether the data are plausible/realistic. To make an accurate assessment of this it is important to have information about the context of the research, not only in terms of the physical context – for example, youth club, GP surgery, gang headquarters, who else was there (discussion with parents present or discussion with peers present are likely to cause the participant to position himself very differently and thus to respond very differently) – but also in terms of feeling that the participants are described in enough detail that the reader can have some sort of insight into their life/situation. Any potential context bias should be considered.

7. Were the methods reliable?

It is important that the method used to collect the data is appropriate for the research question, and that the data generated map well onto the aims of the study. Ideally, more than 1 method should have been used to collect data, or there should be some other kind of system of comparison which allows the data to be compared. This is referred to as triangulation.

Section 5: analysis

Qualitative data analysis is very different from quantitative analysis. This does not mean that it should not be systematic and rigorous but systematicity and rigour require different methods of assessment.

8. Is the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?

The main way to assess this is by how clearly the analysis is reported and whether the analysis is approached systematically. There should be a clear and consistent method for coding and analysing data, and it should be clear how the coding and analytic strategies were derived. Above all, these must be reasonable in light of the evidence and the aims of the study. Transparency is the key to addressing the rigour of the analysis.

9. Are the data rich?

Qualitative researchers use the adjective 'rich' to describe data which is in-depth, convincing, compelling and detailed enough that the reader feels that they have achieved some level of insight into the research participants experience. It's also important to know the 'context' of the data, that is, where it came from, what prompted it and what it pertains to.

10. Is the analysis reliable?

The analysis of data can be made more reliable by setting checks in place. It is good practice to have sections of data coded by another researcher, or at least have a second researcher check the coding for consistency. Participants may also be allowed to verify the transcripts of their interview (or other data collection, if appropriate). Negative/discrepant results should always be highlighted and discussed.

11. Are the findings convincing?

In qualitative research, the reader should find the results of the research convincing, or credible. This means that the findings should be clearly presented and logically organised, that they should not contradict themselves without explanation or consideration and that they should be clear and coherent.

Extracts from original data should be included where possible to give a fuller sense of the findings, and these data should be appropriately referenced – although you would expect data to be anonymised, it still needs to be referenced in relevant ways, for example if gender differences were important then you would expect extracts to be marked male/female.

12–13. Relevance of findings and conclusions

These sections are self-explanatory.

Section 6: ethics

14. How clear and coherent is the reporting of ethics?

All qualitative research has ethical considerations and these should be considered within any research report. Ideally there should be a full discussion of ethics, although this is rare because of space limitations in peer-reviewed journals. If there are particularly fraught ethical issues raised by a particularly sensitive piece of research, then these should be discussed in enough detail that the reader is convinced that every care was taken to protect research participants.

Any research with human participants should be approved by a research ethics committee and this should be reported.

Section 7: overall assessment

15. Is the study relevant?

Does the study cast light on the review being undertaken?

16. How well was the study conducted?

Grade the study according to the list below:

++ All or most of the checklist criteria have been fulfilled, where they have not been fulfilled the conclusions are very unlikely to alter.

+ Some of the checklist criteria have been fulfilled, where they have not been fulfilled, or not adequately described, the conclusions are unlikely to alter.

– Few or no checklist criteria have been fulfilled and the conclusions are likely or very likely to alter.

2.3 Appendix 1C: Grading of papers between reviewers using NICE quality appraisal checklist for qualitative studies

Score of 'Plus plus' (green); score of 'plus' (orange); Score of 'minus' (red)				
	Sarjan	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 3
Troubling Meanings of "Family" for Young People Who Have Been in Care: From Policy to Lived Experience				
Joining a new family: the views and experiences of young people placed with permanent families during middle childhood				
Using appreciative inquiry to support the development of a sense of belonging for children in care who are experiencing an atypical in-year transition to a new school				
Different' and 'Devalued': Managing the Stigma of Foster-Care with the Benefit of Peer Support				
A shared experience of fragmentation: Making sense of foster placement breakdown				
Continuities and discontinuities: Issues concerning the establishment of a persistent sense of self amongst care leavers				
The significance of a secure base: A psychosocial model of long-term foster care				
Making sense of adoption: Integration and differentiation from the perspective of adopted children in middle childhood				
I'm More Than Just Adopted: Stories of				

Genealogy in Intercountry Adoptive Families				
Care leavers and social capital: understanding and negotiating racial and ethnic identity				
Lasting Relationships in Foster Care: Research for Practice Summary				
'We are the same as everyone else just with a different and unique backstory': Identity, belonging and 'othering' within education for young people who are 'looked after'				
A sense of belonging: Meanings of family and home in long-term foster care				

2.4 Appendix 1D: Extraction grid

Author - Title	Theme/ subtheme						
Boddy, J. (2019) -	Theme	Troubling meanings of family;					
	Subtheme	Recognizing the "Ordinary" (x2) ***Comments**: (Symbolism and memories as a connection to birth family)* A Different Sort of Relationship? (x1) ***Comments**: (Mixed feelings recalling memories of Birth family relationships with birth mother)* A Sense of Connected Selves (x4) ***Comments**: (Relationships with siblings and importance of memories and symbolism)* "Family" as Multifaceted and Dynamic (x2) ***Comments**: (Relationship to birth family; family labels; belonging to foster family as a process)*					
Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005)	Theme	**Becoming part of a new family (x11)**	**Being part of the family (x7)**	**Parent–child relationships (x0)**	**Family life (x0)**	**Being adopted or fostered (x10)**	
	Subtheme	***Comments**: (Transitions – process of joining a family – welcoming into a family and labels for foster parents)*	***Comments**: (Developing relationships with foster parents – past experiences influencing current relationships)*	***Comments**: (Relationship to birth mother)*	***Comments**: (Day-to-day family life)*	***Comments**: (The wish for permanency with a family – uncertainty about people, place and expectations)*	
Greenwood, L., & Kelly, C. (2020).	Theme	**Session one, discovery; exploring what 'is' – young people** (x3)	**Session three, dream; imagining what 'could be' – young people** (x3)		**Session five – design; determining what 'should be' – joint** (x0)		
	Subtheme	***Comments**: (New school transitions – importance of support from teachers and other pupils)*	***Comments**: (New school transitions – importance of friends and teachers as a reference point and child friendly information)*		***Comments**: (New school transitions – school processes)*		
Rodgers, J. (2017)	Theme	**Being different** (x4)	**Feeling devalued** (x3)		**Managing spoiled identities: disclosure and the support of peers** (x5)		
	Subtheme	***Comments**: (stigma related to being in care with friendships and the importance of normal experiences in social interactions)*	***Comments**: (Stigma of being in care – risk of insults from peers with disclosure of care statusl)*		***Comments**: (Belonging to other young people in care – reduced stigma and not feeling alone)*		

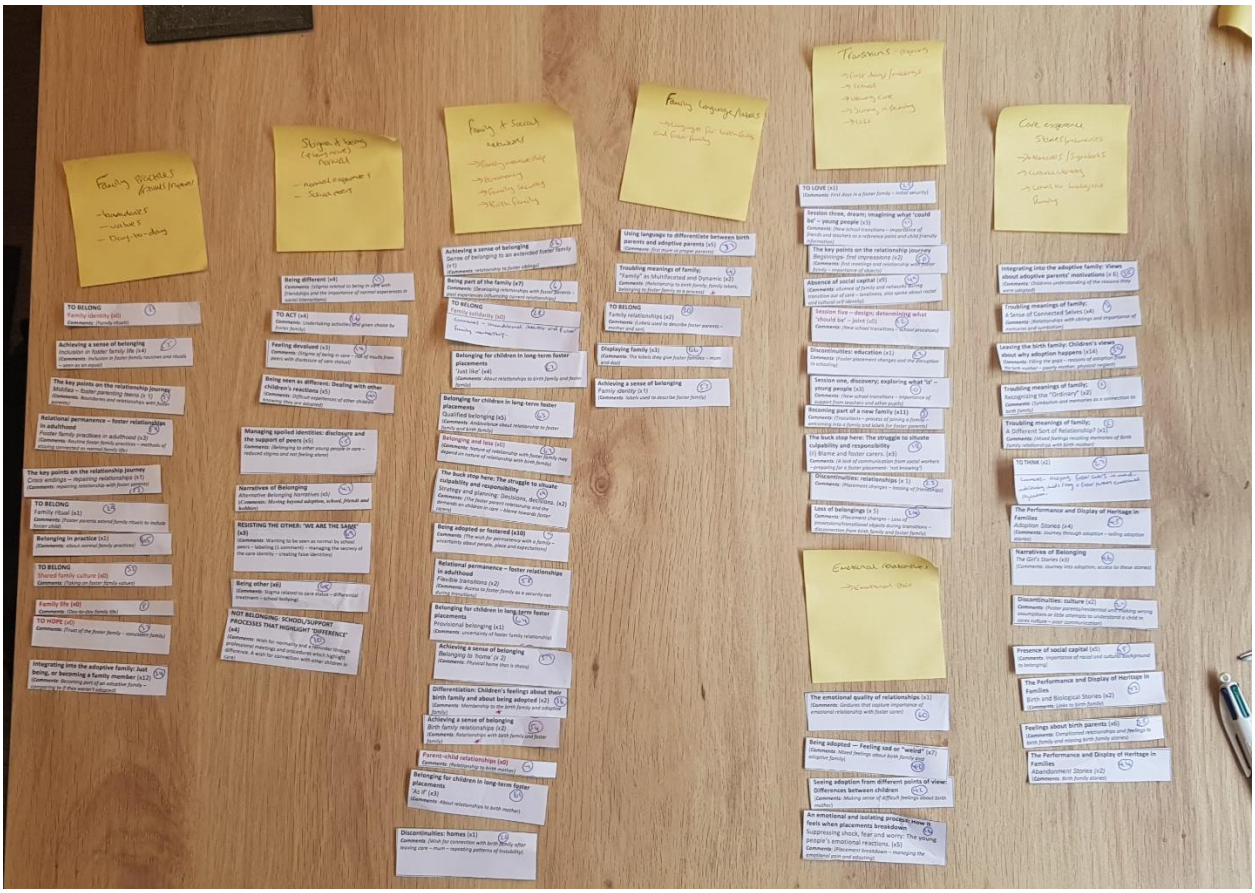
Rostill-Brookes, H., Larkin, M., Toms, A., & Churchman, C. (2011).	Theme	**An emotional and isolating process: How it feels when placements breakdown**			**The buck stop here: The struggle to situate culpability and responsibility**		
	Subtheme	Suppressing shock, fear and worry: The young people's emotional reactions. (x5) ***Comments**: (Placement breakdown – managing the emotional pain and adapting)*			(i) Blame and recrimination: It is all your fault. (x0) ***Comments**: (Passing on responsibility)* (ii) Blame and foster carers. (x3) ***Comments**: (A lack of communication from social workers – preparing for a foster placement- 'not knowing')* Strategy and planning: Decisions, decisions. (x2) ***Comments**: (The foster parent relationship and the demands on children in care – blame towards foster carers)*		
Ward, H. (2011)	Theme	**Discontinuities: homes** (x1)	**Discontinuities: culture** (x2)	**Discontinuities: education** (x1)	**Discontinuities: relationships** (x 1)	**Loss of belongings** (x 5)	
	Subtheme	***Comments**: (Wish for connection with birth family after leaving care – mum – repeating patterns of instability)*	***Comments**: (Foster parents/residential unit making wrong assumptions or little attempts to understand a child in cares culture – poor communication)*	***Comments**: (Foster placement changes and the disruption to schooling)*	***Comments**: (Placement changes – loosing of friendships)*	***Comments**: (Placement changes – Loss of possessions/transitional objects during transitions – disconnection from birth family and foster family)*	
Schofield, G. (2002).	Theme	**TO LOVE** (x1)	**TO ACT** (x4)	**TO THINK** (x2)	**TO BELONG**	**TO HOPE** (x0)	
	Subtheme	(***Comments**: First days in a foster family – initial security)*	***Comments**: Undertaking activities and given choice by foster family)*	***Comments:** (Keeping foster carers in mind – understanding the child's story and foster parents emotional regulation)*	Family solidarity (x0) ***Comments**: (Unconditional interest and foster family membership)* Family ritual (x1) ***Comments**: (Foster parents extend family rituals to include foster child)*	***Comments**: (Trust of the foster family – consistent family)*	

					Family relationships (x2) ***Comments**: Labels used to describe foster parents – mother and son*) Family identity (x0) ***Comments**: Family rituals*) Shared family culture (x0) ***Comments**: (Taking on foster family values*)		
Neil, E. (2012)		**Integrating into the adoptive family: Just being, or becoming a family member** (x12)	**Integrating into the adoptive family: Views about adoptive parents' motivations** (x 6)	**Differentiation: Children's feelings about their birth family and about being adopted** (x2) (***Comments**: Membership to the birth family and adoptive family*)			
	Subtheme	(***Comments**: Becoming part of an adoptive family – comparing to if they weren't adopted*)	(***Comments**: Childrens understanding of the reasons they were adopted*)	**Using language to differentiate between birth parents and adoptive parents** (x5) (***Comments**: first mum vs proper parents*) **Feelings about birth parents** (x6) (***Comments**: Complicated relationships and feelings to birth family and missing birth family stories*) **Leaving the birth family: Children's views about why adoption happens** (x14) (***Comments**: Filling the gaps – reasons of adoption from the birth mother – poorly mother, physical neglect*) **Being adopted — Feeling sad or "weird"** (x7) (***Comments**: Mixed feelings about birth family and adoptive family*) **Being seen as different: Dealing with other children's reactions** (x5) (***Comments**: Difficult experiences of other children knowing they are adopted*) **Seeing adoption from different points of view: Differences between children** (***Comments**: Making sense of difficult feelings about birth mother*)		

Richards, S. (2018)	Themes	**The Performance and Display of Heritage in Families**		**Narratives of Belonging**		
	Subthemes	Birth and Biological Stories (x2) (***Comments**: Links to birth family*) *Abandonment Stories (x2)* (***Comments**: Birth family stories*) *Adoption Stories (x4)* (***Comments**: Journey through adoption – telling adoption stories*)		***4.1** The Girl's Stories (x3)* ***4.2** (Comments: Journey into adoption, access to these stories)* ***4.3** Alternative Belonging Narratives (x5)* (***Comments**: Moving beyond adoption, school, friends and hobbies*)		
Barn (2010)	**Themes**	**Presence of social capital** (x5) (***Comments**: Importance of racial and cultural background to belonging*)		**Absence of social capital** (x9) (***Comments**: absence of family and networks during transition out of care – loneliness, also spoke about racial and cultural self-identity*)		
	Subthemes					
MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021).	Themes	**The key points on the relationship journey**	**Achieving a sense of belonging**	**Relational permanence – foster relationships in adulthood**	**The emotional quality of relationships (x1)**	
	Subthemes	***4.4** Beginnings- first impressions (x2)* (***Comments**: first meetings and relationship with foster family – importance of objects)* ***4.5*** ***4.6** Middles – foster parenting teens (x 1)* (***Comments**: Boundaries and relationships with foster parents)* ***4.7*** ***4.8** Crisis endings – repairing relationships (x1)* (***Comments**: repairing relationship with foster parents)*	***4.9** Family identity (x1)* (***Comments**: labels used to describe foster family)* ***4.10*** ***4.11** Birth family relationships (x2)* (***Comments**: Relationships with birth family and foster family)* ***4.12*** ***4.13** Inclusion in foster family life (x4)* (***Comments**: Inclusion in foster family routines and rituals – seen as an equal)* ***4.14*** ***4.15** Sense of belonging to an extended foster family (x1)* (***Comments**: relationship to foster siblings)*	***4.19** Flexible transitions (x2)* (***Comments**: Access to foster family as a security net during transitions)* ***4.20*** ***4.21** Foster family practices in adulthood (x3)* (***Comments**: Routine foster family practices – methods of staying connected as normal family life)* ***4.22***	(***Comments**: Gestures that capture importance of emotional relationship with foster carer)* ***4.23***	

			4.16 ***4.17*** *Belonging to 'home' (x 2)* (***Comments***: *Physical home that is theirs)* ***4.18***			
Biehal, N. (2014)	Themes	**Belonging for children in long-term foster placements**	**Belonging in practice** (x1) (***Comments***: *about normal family practices)*	**Displaying family** (x3) (***Comments***: *The labels they give foster families – mum and dad)*	**Belonging and loss** (x0) (***Comments***: *Nature of relationship with foster family may depend on nature of relationship with birth family)*	
	Subthemes	'As if' (x3) (***Comments***: *About relationships to birth mother*) 'Just like' (x4) (***Comments***: *About relationships to birth family and foster family*) Qualified belonging (x5) (***Comments***: *Ambivalence about relationship to foster family and birth family*) Provisional belonging (x1) (***Comments***: uncertainty of foster family relationship)				
Jones, L., Dean, C., Dunhill, A., Hope, M. A., & Shaw, P. A. (2020).	Themes	**Being other (x6)** (***Comments***: Stigma related to care status – differential treatment – school bullying)	**RESISTING THE OTHER: 'WE ARE THE SAME' (x3)** (***Comments***: Wanting to be seen as normal by school peers – labelling (1 comment) – managing the secrecy of the care identity – creating false identities)	**NOT BELONGING: SCHOOL/SUPPORT PROCESSES THAT HIGHLIGHT 'DIFFERENCE' (x4)** (***Comments***: Wish for normality and a reminder through professional meetings and procedures which highlight difference. A wish for connection with other children in care)		

2.5 Appendix 1E: Extraction grid analysed



2.6 Appendix 1F: Full reciprocal translations and the authors and themes that contributed to them

Family practices rituals - Boundaries - Values - Normal day-to-day practices - Ruptures - Valued/Included	**Stigma of being in care and being normal** - Normal experiences - School peers – fitting in – having 'normal' experiences	**Emotional relationships** - Emotional pain	**Family and social networks** - Family membership - Permanency - Family Security - Birth family **Felt membership to a family** **Rituals** **Birth family relationships**	**Family language/ labels** - Language for birth family and foster family	**Transitions** - Preparing - First days – meeting a new family - School - Leaving care and loss	**Care experience stories/ memories** - memories/ symbols - Cultural identity - Stories of birth family Connected to family practices rituals
8. Family life (x0) ***Authors reflections:*** (young people's perceptions about the day to-day activity of 'family life' not independent of their own feelings) ***Comments****: (Day-to-day family life)*	**13. Being different** (x4) ***Authors reflections:*** (Feeling different as a key element of stigmatisation, using the term 'normal') ***Comments****: (stigma related to being in care with friendships and the importance of normal experiences in social interactions*)	**16. An emotional and isolating process: How it feels when placements breakdown** Suppressing shock, fear and worry: The young people's emotional reactions. (x5) ***Authors reflections:*** (All young people expressed some level of distress about the eventual breakdown – multiple losses) ***Comments****: (Placement breakdown – managing the emotional pain and adapting*)	**6. Being part of the family (x7)** ***Authors reflections:*** (the process of settling in. when they thought, or knew, they had misbehaved was to plan to move on) ***Comments****: (Developing relationships with foster parents – past experiences influencing current relationships)*	**4. Troubling meanings of family;** "Family" as Multifaceted and Dynamic (x2) ***Authors reflections:*** (the language of "family" and family relationships is "invoked precisely to convey that they comprise 'something more') ***Comments****: (Relationship to birth family; family labels; belonging to foster family as a process)*	**5. Becoming part of a new family (x11)** ***Authors reflections:*** (Future security and reliability of care that eased the transition for them. Leaving behind foster care - 'new beginning') ***Comments****: (Transitions – process of joining a family – welcoming into a family and labels for foster parents)*	**1. Troubling meanings of family;** Recognizing the "Ordinary" (x2) ***Authors reflections:*** (Through memories that the identity of a social subject pieces itself together.) ***Comments****: (Symbolism and memories as a connection to birth family)*

26. TO ACT (x4) ***Authors reflections:*** (campaigning on their behalf to overcome difficulties such as dyslexia. Many foster families engaged their children in a range of other activities) ***Comments****: Undertaking activities and given choice by foster family*)	**14. Feeling devalued** (x3) ***Authors reflections:*** (This separation from a parent appears to be at the root of where the young people's stigma originates) ***Comments****: (Stigma of being in care – risk of insults from peers with disclosure of care status)*	**40. Being adopted — Feeling sad or "weird"** (x7) ***Authors reflections:*** (Identified sad or strange feelings associated with being adopted) (***Comments****: Mixed feelings about birth family and adoptive family*)	**7. Parent–child relationships (x0)** ***Authors reflections:*** (overall harmony of family life) ***Comments****: (Relationship to birth mother)*	**30. TO BELONG** Family relationships (x2) ***Authors reflections:*** (Some rituals, such as the sending of Mother's Day cards, brought the definition of the relationship. family relationships in terms of the usual family labels acted as evidence of belonging) ***Comments****: (Labels used to describe foster parents – mother and son*)	**9. Being adopted or fostered (x10)** ***Authors reflections:*** (difficulties associated with moving homes and leaving behind previous attachments. did not feel part of the family. degree of ambivalence) ***Comments****: (The wish for permanency with a family – uncertainty about people, place and expectations)*	**2. Troubling meanings of family;** A Different Sort of Relationship? (x1) ***Authors reflections:*** (Sense of self which is partly defined through family memories and relationships that span time and generation – still struggling with feelings of anger and loss) ***Comments****: (Mixed feelings recalling memories of Birth family relationships with birth mother)*
29. TO BELONG Family ritual (x1) ***Authors reflections:*** (family rituals extended to embrace the foster child) ***Comments****: (Foster parents extend family rituals to include foster child*)	**15. Managing spoiled identities: disclosure and the support of peers** (x5) ***Authors reflections:*** (how important peers are to manage stigma being amongst others who understand and share the stigma appears to lessen the pressures of managing a spoiled identity) ***Comments****: (Belonging to other young people in care – reduced stigma and not feeling alone*)	**42. Seeing adoption from different points of view: Differences between children** ***Authors reflections:*** (adoptive parents shaped and scaffolded their understanding and feelings, and this is likely to have helped build children's emotional resilience) ***Comments****: (Making sense of difficult feelings about birth mother*)	**20. Discontinuities: homes** (x1) ***Authors reflections:*** (many children experience greater stability in care than they do with their birth families) ***Comments****: (Wish for connection with birth family after leaving care – mum – repeating patterns of instability*)	**37. Using language to differentiate between birth parents and adoptive parents** (x5) ***Authors reflections:*** (Attempts to make sense of having two sets of parents were often suggested in the language children used) ***Comments****: (first mum vs proper parents*)	**10. Session one, discovery; exploring what 'is' – young people** (x3) ***Authors reflections:*** (support from other pupils and teachers throughout the transition process) ***Comments****: (New school transitions – importance of support from teachers and other pupils)*	**3. Troubling meanings of family;** A Sense of Connected Selves (x4) ***Authors reflections:*** (all those discussed so far had memories of life with their birth families prior to placement, and to varying degrees, all had contact with birth family members after they were placed) ***Comments****: (Relationships with siblings and importance of memories and symbolism)*
31. TO BELONG Family identity (x0) ***Authors reflections:*** (Importance of their family membership. the foster		**60. The emotional quality of relationships** (x1) ***Authors reflections:*** (Participants used the word	**28. TO BELONG** Family solidarity (x0) ***Authors reflections:*** (idea of the foster families as a 'real family' of which they were and are a part)	**53. Achieving a sense of belonging** ***6.1*** *Family identity (x1)* ***Authors reflections:*** (Kinship labels - Naming practices affirmed the young person's	**11. Session three, dream; imagining what 'could be' – young people** (x3)	

family identity. Family rituals) ***Comments**: (Family rituals*)		'love' as an essential feature of their relationship) *(**Comments**: Gestures that capture importance of emotional relationship with foster carer)*	***Comments**: (Unconditional interest and foster family membership*)	status as either 'real family' or 'part of the family') ***Comments**: (labels used to describe foster family)*	***Authors reflections:*** (consider what might happen before, during and after the transition takes place) ***Comments**: (New school transitions – importance of friends and teachers as a reference point and child friendly information)*	
32. TO BELONG Shared family culture (x0) ***Authors reflections:*** (Taking on the family culture and various other components of family membership provided a more broadly defined 'secure base') ***Comments**: (Taking on foster family values*)	**41. Being seen as different: Dealing with other children's reactions** (x5) ***Authors reflections:*** (Other children tormenting or teasing them or feeling sorry for them because they were adopted) (***Comments**: Difficult experiences of other children knowing they are adopted*)		**36. Differentiation: Children's feelings about their birth family and about being adopted** (x2) ***Authors reflections:*** (adoptive family made them feel "special" Largest group - brought about a range of positive and negative feelings) ***Comments**: (Membership to the birth family and adoptive family*)	**66. Displaying family** (x3) ***Authors reflections:*** (Calling foster carers 'Mum and Dad', as most of them did, was of considerable symbolic significance to the children - membership of the foster family and the 'normality') ***Comments**: (The labels they give foster families – mum and dad)*	**12. Session five – design; determining what 'should be' – joint** (x0) ***Authors reflections:*** (positive and personalised induction at least one key person we can build a trusting relationship with) ***Comments**: (New school transitions – school processes)*	**27. TO THINK** (x2) ***Authors reflections:*** (helping the children to think through their past, their sense of loss, and manage their feelings about their current relationships with birth family members. Required explanation of their origin) ***Comments:** (Keeping foster carers in mind – understanding the child's story and foster parents emotional regulation)*
33. TO HOPE (x0) ***Authors reflections:*** (Being part of a family appeared to have increased resilience) ***Comments**: (Trust of the foster family – consistent family)*	**47. Narratives of Belonging** ***6.2** Alternative Belonging Narratives (x5)* ***Authors reflections:*** (Some of the stories indicate a desire by the tellers to move beyond the ascribed 'Chinese adopted'.) (***Comments:** Moving beyond adoption, school, friends and hobbies*)		**54. Achieving a sense of belonging** ***6.3** Birth family relationships (x2)* ***Authors reflections:*** (Membership of their foster family felt authentic and real most of the time, but during contact visits) ***Comments**: (Relationships with birth family and foster family)*		**18. The buck stop here: The struggle to situate culpability and responsibility** (ii) Blame and foster carers. (x3) ***Authors reflections:*** (the majority of placement breakdowns involved carers using physical interventions or setting unnecessarily restrictive boundaries – assigning blame)	**35. Integrating into the adoptive family: Views about adoptive parents' motivations** (x 6) ***Authors reflections:*** (Only one child explicitly made this link saying he felt sad) ***Comments**: (Childrens understanding of the story behind why their adoptive parents adopted theme*)

					***Comments**: (A lack of communication from social workers – preparing for a foster placement- 'not knowing'*)	
34. Integrating into the adoptive family: Just being, or becoming a family member (x12) ***Authors reflections:*** (Emphasised family membership; Family integration) (***Comments**: Becoming part of an adoptive family – comparing to if they weren't adopted*)	**68. Being other (x6)** ***Authors reflections:*** (Identification as 'different' to their non-looked after peers in the context of their schooling. Treated differently by school teachers) (***Comments***: Stigma related to care status – differential treatment – school bullying)		**57. Achieving a sense of belonging** ***6.4** Belonging to 'home' (x 2)* ***Authors reflections:*** ('Home' was a roof over your head, and a place to store your stuff but also represented a place to belong emotionally) ***Comments**: (Physical home that is theirs)*		**21. Discontinuities: culture** (x2) ***Authors reflections:*** (Changes of household and primary carer were also frequently accompanied by changes of culture) ***Comments**: (Foster parents/residential unit making wrong assumptions or little attempts to understand a child in cares culture – poor communication*)	**38. Feelings about birth parents** (x6) ***Authors reflections:*** (Several children shared their life story books with the researcher, but many commented that their current knowledge was out of date) ***Comments**: (Complicated relationships and feelings to birth family and missing birth family stories*)
51. The key points on the relationship journey ***6.5** Middles – foster parenting teens (x 1)* ***Authors reflections:*** (day-to-day lived experience of family belonging. Preserve the young person's sense of normality and social inclusion.) ***Comments**: (Boundaries and relationships with foster parents)*	**69. RESISTING THE OTHER: 'WE ARE THE SAME' (x3)** ***Authors reflections:*** (The stigmatised 'looked after' label often involves hurtful encounters with peers; young people may seek to distance themselves from or even 'refuse' this label) (***Comments***: Wanting to be seen as normal by school peers – labelling (1 comment) – managing the secrecy of the care identity – creating false identities)		**58. Relational permanence – foster relationships in adulthood** ***6.6** Flexible transitions (x2)* ***Authors reflections:*** (Foster family home was an ongoing resource into adulthood) ***Comments**: (Access to foster family as a security net during transitions)*		**22. Discontinuities: education** (x1) ***Authors reflections:*** (school changes; disruption to education before and after the care episode) ***Comments**: (Foster placement changes and the disruption to schooling*)	**39. Leaving the birth family: Children's views about why adoption happens** (x14) ***Authors reflections:*** (they need to make sense of why they did not stay with their birth family) ***Comments**: (Filling the gaps – reasons of adoption from the birth mother – poorly mother, physical neglect*)

52. The key points on the relationship journey ***6.7*** *Crisis endings – repairing relationships (x1)* ***Authors reflections:*** (Process of reparation that allowed their relationship to be sustained) ***Comments****: (repairing relationship with foster parents)*	**70. NOT BELONGING: SCHOOL/SUPPORT PROCESSES THAT HIGHLIGHT 'DIFFERENCE' (x4)** ***Authors reflections:*** (A real tension between wanting their status as looked after to be private, and only shared when necessary, but a desire to want to know which other children in their school were looked after) (***Comments***: Wish for normality and a reminder through professional meetings and procedures which highlight difference. A wish for connection with other children in care)		**61. Belonging for children in long-term foster placements** 'As if' (x3) ***Authors reflections:*** (Primary identification was with their foster families. The sense that 'you belong to me and I belong to you') ***Comments****: (About relationships to birth mother*)		**23. Discontinuities: relationships** (x 1) ***Authors reflections:*** (Moves between schools and placements were also accompanied by continuous changes within them) ***Comments****: (Placement changes – loosing of friendships*)	**43. The Performance and Display of Heritage in Families** Birth and Biological Stories (x2) ***Authors reflections:*** (Birth stories seek to anchor children to a biological family, birth country, and culture; a starting point from which identity and alternative belongings can emerge) ***Comments****: (Links to birth family*)
55. Achieving a sense of belonging ***6.8*** *Inclusion in foster family life (x4)* ***Authors reflections:*** (Living 'ordinary' family life together; unremarkable or mundane family practices were in fact highly significant) ***Comments****: (Inclusion in foster family routines and rituals – seen as an equal)*			**63. Belonging for children in long-term foster placements** Qualified belonging (x5) ***Authors reflections:*** (troubled by feelings of hurt, anger and ambivalence towards their birth parents and often by conflicts of loyalty to foster parents) ***Comments****: (Ambivalence about relationship to foster family and birth family*)		**24. Loss of belongings** (x 5) ***Authors reflections:*** (instability and transience) ***Comments****: (Placement changes – Loss of possessions/transitional objects during transitions – disconnection from birth family and foster family*)	**44. The Performance and Display of Heritage in Families** *Abandonment Stories (x2)* ***Authors reflections:*** (abandonment story which is told in order for the adoption story which follows to make sense as part of these children's heritage narratives) ***Comments****: (Birth family stories*)

56. Achieving a sense of belonging ***6.9*** *Sense of belonging to an extended foster family (x1)* ***Authors reflections:*** (included care experienced participants in activities this enabled them to feel "like I am their family". Memorable celebrations as well as more mundane routines) ***Comments****: (relationship to foster siblings)*			**64. Belonging for children in long-term foster placements** Provisional belonging (x1) ***Authors reflections:*** (his sense of belonging was provisional. He called them 'Mum and Dad') ***Comments***: (uncertainty of foster family relationship)		**25. TO LOVE** (x1) ***Authors reflections:*** (As children entered the foster home - Continuity of placement, or at least continuity of relationship, had offered security and predictability) ***Comments****: (First days in a foster family – initial security*)	**45. The Performance and Display of Heritage in Families** *Adoption Stories (x4)* ***Authors reflections:*** (How children came to be in their adopted families is vital belonging story which often begins with a first meeting) ***Comments****: (Journey through adoption – telling adoption stories*)
59. Relational permanence – foster relationships in adulthood ***6.10*** *Foster family practices in adulthood (x3)* ***Authors reflections:*** ((Care experienced participants partners included in this supportive family network - family obligation) *(**Comments**: Routine foster family practices – methods of staying connected as normal family life)*			**67. Belonging and loss** (x0) ***Authors reflections:*** (May therefore create a self-defined 'real family' while also feeling a sense of belonging to a foster family, developing complex and fluid definitions of family) ***Comments****: (Nature of relationship with foster family may depend on nature of relationship with birth family)*		**49. Absence of social capital** (x9) ***Authors reflections:*** (Leaving care the majority of the young people had very little or no contact with their birth family.) ***Comments****: (absence of family and networks during transition out of care – loneliness, also spoke about racial and cultural self-identity*)	**46. Narratives of Belonging** ***6.11*** *The Girl's Stories (x3)* ***Authors reflections:*** (Identities which these pictures illustrate are shaped by stories told to the girls) ***Comments****: (Journey into adoption, access to these stories*)
62. Belonging for children in long-term foster placements 'Just like' (x4) ***Authors reflections:*** (Members of their foster					**50. The key points on the relationship journey**	**48. Presence of social capital** (x5) ***Authors reflections:*** (conceptualized their racial and cultural identity to be an important component of

families. Reconcile belonging to two sets of parents. day-to-day practices of her foster family positioned her as a 'normal' member) ***Comments**: (About relationships to birth family and foster family*)					***6.12** Beginnings- first impressions (x2)* ***Authors reflections:*** (First meetings and early days of placement) ***Comments**: (first meetings and relationship with foster family – importance of objects)*	themselves. They expressed pride in their cultural heritage, and vocalized the importance of a sense of belonging) ***Comments**: (Importance of racial and cultural background to belonging)*
65. Belonging in practice (x1) ***Authors reflections:*** (fully included in day-to-day family life. accepted by their carers' extended families, too) *(**Comments**: about normal family practices)*						
Authors contributed: 8, 26, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 51, 52, 55, 56, 59, 62, 65 =11 themes Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005); Schofield, G. (2002); Neil, E. (2012); MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021); Biehal, N. (2014) – **4 papers**	13, 14, 15, 41, 47, 68, 69, 70 = 9 themes Rodgers, J. (2017); Neil, E. (2012); Richards, S. (2018); Jones, L., Dean, C., Dunhill, A., Hope, M. A., & Shaw, P. A. (2020) = **5 papers**	16, 40,42, 60 = 4 Rostill-Brookes, H., Larkin, M., Toms, A., & Churchman, C. (2011); Neil, E. (2012); MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021) = **3 papers**	6, 7, 19, 20, 28, 36, 54, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 67 = 16 Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005); Rostill-Brookes, H., Larkin, M., Toms, A., & Churchman, C. (2011); Ward, H. (2011); Schofield, G. (2002); Neil, E. (2012); MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021); Biehal, N. (2014); = **7 papers**	4, 30, 37, 53, 66 = 5 Boddy, J. (2019); Schofield, G. (2002); Neil, E. (2012); MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021); Biehal, N. (2014) = **5 papers**	5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 49, 50 = 11 Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005); Greenwood, L., & Kelly, C. (2020); Rostill-Brookes, H., Larkin, M., Toms, A., & Churchman, C. (2011); Ward, H. (2011); Schofield, G. (2002); Barn (2010); MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021) = **7 papers**	1, 2, 3, 27, 35, 38, 39, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48 = 13 Boddy, J. (2019); Schofield, G. (2002); Neil, E. (2012); Richards, S. (2018); Barn (2010) = **5 papers**

2.7 Appendix 1G: Translations, themes, quotes and authors interpretations that contribute to them.

Family practices rituals - Boundaries - Values - Normal day-to-day practices - Ruptures	Boddy, J. (2019) -1-4; Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005) – 5-9; Greenwood, L., & Kelly, C. (2020) – 10-12; Rodgers, J. (2017) – 13-15; Rostill-Brookes, H., Larkin, M., Toms, A., & Churchman, C. (2011) – 16-19; Ward, H. (2011) – 20-24; Schofield, G. (2002) – 25-33; Neil, E. (2012) – 34-42; Richards, S. (2018) - 43-47; Barn (2010) - 48-49; MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021) – 50-60; Biehal, N. (2014) – 61-67; Jones, L., Dean, C., Dunhill, A., Hope, M. A., & Shaw, P. A. (2020) - 68-70.
8. Family life (x0) ***Comments**: (Day-to-day family life)*	
26. TO ACT (x4) ***Authors reflections:*** (campaigning on their behalf to overcome difficulties such as dyslexia. Many foster families engaged their children in a range of other activities) ***Comments**: Undertaking activities and given choice by foster family*)	**Authors contributed:** 8, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 51, 52, 55, 59, 65 =11 themes
29. TO BELONG Family ritual (x1) ***Comments**: (Foster parents extend family rituals to include foster child*)	Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005); Schofield, G. (2002); Neil, E. (2012); MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021); Biehal, N. (2014) – **4 papers**
31. TO BELONG Family identity (x0) ***Comments**: (Family rituals*)	Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005). Joining a new family: The views and experiences of young people placed with permanent families during middle childhood. *Adoption & Fostering*, *29*(1), 18-28. - **5-9**
32. TO BELONG Shared family culture (x0) ***Comments**: (Taking on foster family values*)	
33. TO HOPE (x0) ***Comments**: (Trust of the foster family – consistent family)*	Schofield, G. (2002). The significance of a secure base: a psychosocial model of long-term foster care. *Child & Family Social Work*, *7*(4), 259-272. **- 25-33**
34. Integrating into the adoptive family: Just being, or becoming a family member (x12) (***Comments**: Becoming part of an adoptive family – comparing to if they weren't adopted*)	Neil, E. (2012). Making sense of adoption: Integration and differentiation from the perspective of adopted children in middle childhood. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *34*(2), 409-416. **- 34-42**
51. The key points on the relationship journey ***7.1** Middles – foster parenting teens (x 1)* *(**Comments**: Boundaries and relationships with foster parents)*	
52. The key points on the relationship journey ***7.2** Crisis endings – repairing relationships (x1)* *(**Comments**: repairing relationship with foster parents)*	MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021). Lasting Relationships in Foster Care: Research for Practice Summary. Barnardos. **- 50-60**

55. Achieving a sense of belonging ***7.3*** *Inclusion in foster family life (x4)* *(**Comments**: Inclusion in foster family routines and rituals – seen as an equal)*	Biehal, N. (2014). A sense of belonging: Meanings of family and home in long-term foster care. *British Journal of Social Work*, *44*(4), 955-971. - **61-67**
56. Achieving a sense of belonging ***7.4*** *Sense of belonging to an extended foster family (x1)* *(**Comments**: relationship to foster siblings)*	
59. Relational permanence – foster relationships in adulthood ***7.5*** *Foster family practices in adulthood (x3)* *(**Comments**: Routine foster family practices – methods of staying connected as normal family life)*	
62. Belonging for children in long-term foster placements 'Just like' (x4) (***Comments**: About relationships to birth family and foster family*)	
65. Belonging in practice (x1) *(**Comments**: about normal family practices)*	

Author	Theme and Quotes	How the authors spoke about it
Dance, C., & Rushton, A. (2005). Joining a new family: The views and experiences of young people placed with permanent families during middle childhood. *Adoption & Fostering*, *29*(1), 18-28. - **5-9**	**8. Family life (x0)** ***Comments**: (Day-to-day family life)*	Emotional tone of their home life family cohesiveness (defined here as doing things as a family, being interested in each other) co-operate with parental requests. (eg the level of harmony, the general tone of the household, etc). young people's perceptions about the day to-day activity of 'family life' not independent of their own feelings more generally or their own experience.
Schofield, G. (2002). The significance of a secure base: a psychosocial model of long-term foster care. *Child & Family Social Work*, *7*(4), 259-272. **- 25-33**	**26. TO ACT** (x4) ***Comments**: Undertaking activities and given choice by foster family*) They'd never, if you were stuck or something, for instance if you got a puncture on your push bike they wouldn't say, oh fair enough, I'll go outside and fix it for you, they'd take you outside, tell	Acting rather than reacting. Option of power and choice. As well as emphasizing the importance of school to the children and campaigning on their behalf to overcome difficulties such as dyslexia, many

	you what to do and then you'd fix it while they sat there and watched you . . . that's why I'm so confident. 'They supported me whatever I wanted to do'. 'But if I'm at work and I'm having a bad week – the stress of my apprenticeship, my exams, then I'll ring her [foster mother] and she'll say, try, if you don't try you'll spend the rest of your life wondering.' So you can ring her? 'Oh yes – the first person I'd turn to.'	foster families engaged their children in a range of other activities.
Schofield, G. (2002). The significance of a secure base: a psychosocial model of long-term foster care. *Child & Family Social Work*, *7*(4), 259-272. **- 25-33**	**29. TO BELONG** Family ritual (x1) ***Comments**: (Foster parents extend family rituals to include foster child*) 'I was proud to have them there . . . my senior officer and that knew the situation and going for interview . . . he said who's going to be there for your passing out and I said, my foster parents, they haven't just deserted me – so they were there.'	family rituals are a major feature of our cultural life. Belonging to a foster family in this study meant that family rituals extended to embrace the foster child. Family photographs on the wall included the foster child. Christmas and birthdays. the ritual family gatherings mattered. major lifetime events where parents were required, foster carers stepped in. 'This is our free choice. We have no biological, legal or social obligation to offer this public proof of family membership – but we do'.
	31. TO BELONG Family identity (x0) ***Comments**: (Family rituals*)	Offering not just emotional healing but a place in society. A place in the community in which they lived. family feeling and identity. Importance of their family membership. the foster family identity. Family rituals, received birthday and

		Christmas cards to 'mum and dad' from a person who regarded themselves as a son or daughter in both families
	32. TO BELONG Shared family culture (x0) ***Comments**: (Taking on foster family values*)	Each foster family had its own particular norms and values, and belonging to that family meant paying close attention to their particular family culture. his may have been simple life-style choices, such as being interested in football, fishing, classical music or foreign holidays. At another level, it could be matters of moral principle, such as consideration for others, a determination to stay out of debt or a horror of dishonesty and crime. Subscribing to this family culture and following its direction successfully seemed to lead to feelings of self-esteem and competence. The wish to conform to the family's prosocial norms and values seemed to increase the likelihood of stability of work, accommodation and relationships. Taking on the family culture in addition to the various other components of family membership provided a more broadly defined 'secure base' that increased the likelihood of hopefulness for the future.
	33. TO HOPE (x0) ***Comments**: (Trust of the foster family – consistent family)*	Significant support from other people. Use available external resources. Feeling secure emotionally, being effective, being reflective and being part of a family appeared to have increased resilience.

Neil, E. (2012). Making sense of adoption: Integration and differentiation from the perspective of adopted children in middle childhood. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *34*(2), 409-416. **- 34-42**	**34. Integrating into the adoptive family: Just being, or becoming a family member** (x12) (***Comments**: Becoming part of an adoptive family – comparing to if they weren't adopted*) "It's just they care for me in every way", "they think I am nice, and they just love me". e.g. "because you have to stay with the people forever and ever", "getting a new family". "I am actually feeling that I am actually part of this family and I am not adopted, I am beginning to actually fit in and everything."	Emphasised family membership; Family integration. complaining about rules or having to do chores. Several children argued that being adopted was "normal" or "no different". Successfully integrated into their adoptive families.
MacDonald, M., & Marshall, G. (2021). Lasting Relationships in Foster Care: Research for Practice Summary. Barnardos. **- 50-60**	**51. The key points on the relationship journey** *7.6 Middles – foster parenting teens (x 1)* *(**Comments**: Boundaries and relationships with foster parents)* "I was just like frustrated because I just couldn't be like my peers… like I was under a scope basically… I thought she was just touting on me kind of thing, and I would be like 'why do you have to tell them?' but it was just because she wanted to keep us, so it her way of trying to say 'I love you that much that I am going to do this properly'."	The procedural requirements of corporate parenting in the teenage years emphasised their fostered status in a way that contradicted their day-to-day lived experience of family belonging. Allowing age-appropriate risk-taking but feeling constrained by the rules and processes of foster care. Processes were described abnormal family practices → This emphasised their 'other' and 'outsider' status. Preserve the young person's sense of normality and social inclusion. Communication and mutual respect.
	52. The key points on the relationship journey *7.7 Crisis endings – repairing relationships (x1)* *(**Comments**: repairing relationship with foster parents)* one person for example sent the foster carers 'some dumb art stuff' they had made.	a process of reparation that allowed their relationship to be sustained. one couple for example made a photograph album for the young person to celebrate the good times they had shared. opportunity to say sorry either

		verbally or through small gestures that conveyed respect and care
	55. Achieving a sense of belonging ***7.8*** *Inclusion in foster family life (x4)* *(**Comments**: Inclusion in foster family routines and rituals – seen as an equal)* "The dinner was always on the table at the same time… there was always a routine." "I was kind of allowed to make my own decisions like everybody else was in the house. For example, like, maybe if I wanted to drive, I would have been given the same opportunities as everybody else." "the high days were like you know, you're going on your holiday or you get a good score on your on your test and you get taken out for dinner, you know birthday parties, Christmas gathering, you know where the whole family would come together and just relax and spend time together..." "everything that she would have done years before I was born, she brought me up doing the same thing, so it was always a tradition… my whole life is just built around memories with them."	Living 'ordinary' family life together: seemingly small unremarkable or mundane family practices were in fact highly significant. Predictable and consistent enabled a sense of security and built trust in the relationships. treated 'no differently', or just the same as, foster carers birth children. treated like one of their own' included: having the same agerelated rights-of-passage; inclusion in family holidays and celebrations; equal value of presents received at Christmas; freedom to tease and be teased or even bicker. same opportunities foster family celebrations and to have foster relatives join them for their own important rights-of-passage and life celebrations. included in family weddings. Inclusion in longstanding foster family traditions brought a reassuring sense of longevity and helped young people locate their place in the wider foster family. Shared memories and family stories provide a strong emotive connection that anchored care experienced adults to the extended foster family normal family practices
	56. Achieving a sense of belonging ***7.9*** *Sense of belonging to an extended foster family (x1)* *(**Comments**: relationship to foster siblings)*	When foster carers' friends and relatives included care experienced participants in activities this enabled them to feel "like I am their family". Memorable celebrations as well as

	"I never really fought with them cos I was the baby so they just… loved me. Still do.... I needed a lot of attention I guess. But they liked playing with me and doing stuff with me."	more mundane routines, for example, popping into a foster grandparent's house for a snack on the way home from school, brought fun, a sense of inclusion and a stock of fond memories Foster siblings were very influential in promoting a sense of family belonging,
	59. Relational permanence – foster relationships in adulthood ***7.10*** *Foster family practices in adulthood (x3)* (***Comments****: Routine foster family practices – methods of staying connected as normal family life)* Alison gave an example of what she said was a normal adult relationship with George giving plumbing instructions over the phone: "I lost my wedding ring down the sink, and I phoned him in a panic like, 'is it lost?' and he was like 'no, unscrew this bit, unscrew that bit and there you go'." "Dad told an embarrassing joke and I was going, Dad no! my Dad was just talking for ages and so was my Mum and his Mum… they love him, and his parents love me."	Staying in touch was not just about need or support but also centred on common interests. making time to relax together and enjoy one another's company through a shared activity – usually watching the same TV show, either together or from their separate homes, which provided a focal point for conversation. Care experienced participants partners included in this supportive family network. family obligation → part and parcel of being a family. Mutually giving and receiving support also provided a framework of routine.
Biehal, N. (2014). A sense of belonging: Meanings of family and home in long-term foster care. *British Journal of Social Work*, *44*(4), 955-971. - **61-67**	**62. Belonging for children in long-term foster placements** 'Just like' (x4) (***Comments****: About relationships to birth family and foster family*) Just like any normal family, really. It's just like they act, they act the same as they would with their children .... They're just basically my	Members of their foster families. Reconcile belonging to two sets of parents, day-to-day practices of her foster family positioned her as a 'normal' member of the family: The second group had contact with their birth family too - neither they nor their foster carers

	parents, to be honest. I probably do really love them, 'cos they're just like my parents. I like going to see her, she's really nice, she's quite small (laughs), like me .... She buys us sweets. Then she buys us presents and everything so, basically, things like a normal parent as well. I love being here and I love you, but I want to be with my mum. Does that make sense? I say 'Of course it does' (Sarah's foster carer)	felt that the foster family had in any sense replaced the birth family. Nathan also felt a sense of belonging to his foster family and felt loved, settled and secure within it. However, he displayed a greater sense of ambivalence, remarking that 'a foster home can't be the same as your real home'. These young people were able to reconcile belonging to two families and indicated that they loved both their foster carers and their birth parents. The foster carers' inclusiveness of the birth family facilitated this contact and none of the children gave any indication that they felt troubled by conflicts of loyalty.
	65. Belonging in practice (x1) *(**Comments**: about normal family practices)* *"*Like they take us out for days out and stuff. We go on a lot of holidays. Just like any normal family really. It's just like they act, they act the same as they would with their children and stuff."	fully included in day-to-day family life. accepted by their carers' extended families, too. Families as 'an active process' rather than a fixed structure, involving the day-to-day practice of 'doing family things' Membership of foster families was enacted through their inclusion in routine family activities on special family occasions, such as birthday celebrations, family outings and holidays. Treated the same as their foster carers' biological children. 'normal' siblings. For these children, membership of the foster family was implicit in the family's day-to-day practices.

CHAPTER 2 APPENDICES

2.1 Appendix 2A: Schedule of events for participant recruitment

Recruitment from services	Recruitment from social media - twitter
1. Introducing the research topic to local services, briefing clinical teams and management through email and video call meetings. The project poster was initially shared followed by a more detailed information sheet containing the rationale for research and inclusion and exclusion criteria to assist with identifying potential participants.	1. Emailing UK wide charities that support care leavers, sharing initial information on the project through a project poster which was also shared on Twitter, including deadlines for recruitment. An information sheet was shared if participants got in contact. It contained rationale for research and inclusion and exclusion criteria to assist with identifying potential participants.
2. Potential participants identified and approached by the clinical team with participant information sheet. An expression of interest was obtained.	2. Using twitter to share information about the project and calling out directly to the charities initially contacted, tagging them in the post with the offer for their members (mostly care leavers) to get in contact with the research team.
3. Participants get in contact with the research team. The lead researcher provides opportunities to meet with the prospective participants to establish a relationship, discuss any questions/concerns and share the consent form providing the participant a week to respond via email to allow for reflection on whether they would like to participate. They are then asked to complete a consent form and return it as a hard copy or respond through email.	
4. Before meeting for the interview participants are given a photo task. The purpose was to take pictures or find images from the internet or drawings on what belonging meant to them when in care and now that they have left care. The second part of this task was to	

take pictures that gave a sense of what it felt like to be in a foster family that was of a different ethnicity/race to them.

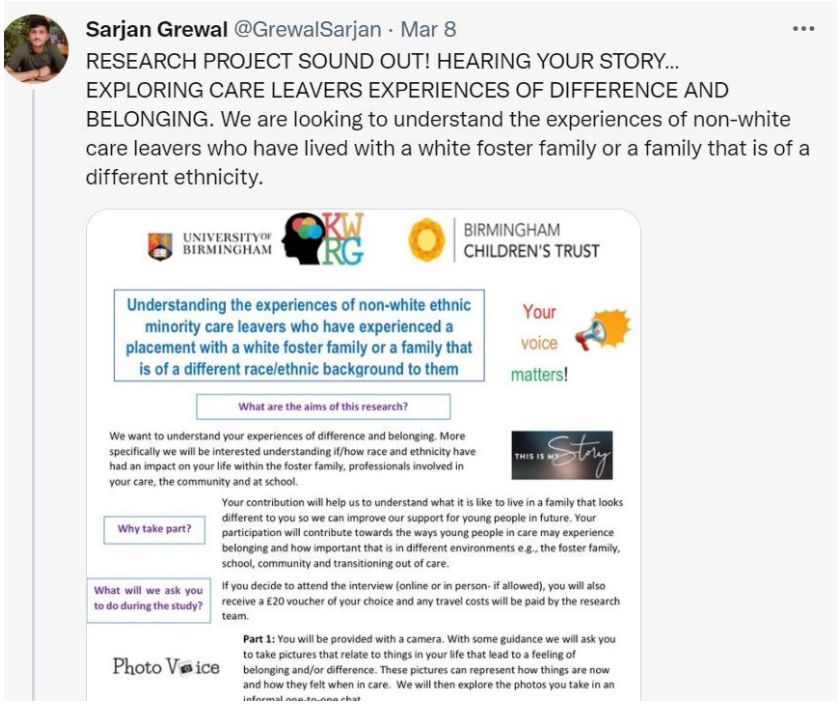
5. Meet with participant in person or via secure zoom to carry out a semi-structured interview. They then reflected on their experienced in the interview and were provided with a debrief form. Participants were informed that they could withdraw consent to participate in the interview at any point. They were given another two-week reflective window after the interviews to request withdrawal of their data before it was entered into analysis. After two weeks, the analysis process began, and it was no longer possible for participants to withdraw their data.

6. Participants were also provided with a demographic questionnaire after the interview to complete and return in their own time.

7. Lead researcher to check in with the participants wellbeing a week later, supporting a space to reflect on their experiences.

8. Participants are provided with a summarised and anonymised report once the data has been collected, analysed. the report will share the analysed results and how the findings can be helpful for other care leavers/ children in care services. participants are given the opportunity to review the evaluation of the results and comment on their thoughts.

2.2 Appendix 2B: Social media message and research poster



Understanding the experiences of non-White ethnic minority care leavers who have experienced a placement with a White foster family or a family that is of a different race/ethnic background to them

Scan here or email Sarjan for more information!

SCAN ME

Your voice matters!

What are the aims of this research?

My name is Sarjan, as a passionate research team at the University of Birmingham we are keen to hear about your experiences of difference and belonging. More specifically we will be interested in understanding if/how race and ethnicity have had an impact on your life within foster placements including with the family you were a part of, the professionals involved in your care, the community and importantly, school.

Why take part?

Your contribution will help us to understand what it is like to live in a family that looks different to you and so we can improve our support to young people in future. Your participation will contribute towards the ways we can support the sense of belonging of children in care and the care experience for everyone involved.

If you decide to attend the interview (online or in person), you will also receive a £20 voucher of your choice and any travel costs will be paid by the research team.

What will we ask you to do during the study?

Photo Voice

Part 1: You will be provided with a camera. With some guidance we will ask you to take pictures that relate to things in your life that lead to a feeling of belonging and/or difference. These pictures can represent how things are now and how it felt when in care. We will then explore the photos you take in an informal one-to-one chat.

Part 2: We will then invite you to discuss your experiences with one of our researchers either at our base at University of Birmingham or through a video call. We will ensure in both cases the room is private and confidential.

Below are the criteria for participation:

- Non-White ethnic minority care leaver who has been in care with a White foster family or a family that is from a different race and/or ethnicity to them <u>for at least 1</u> month

- The information from this project will be anonymised and shared in a written report.
- We take your safety and wellbeing seriously and will support you through the interview and if needed look to signpost to further support services
- We are hoping to start interviews between February-April 2022.

Hello! Please see my Contact details if you would like to find out more:

Sarjan Grewal (Lead Researcher):

2.3 Appendix 2C: Participant information sheet

Participant information Sheet

We would like to invite you to participate in this University or Birmingham project with the School of Psychology. The research is led by Sarjan Grewal and Dr Kate Woodcock, senior lecturer at the university's Psychology department.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Sarjan Grewal ssg533@student.bham.ac.uk,

or Kate Woodcock at [redacted] or [redacted]

Aims

The KWRG are a group of researchers that work as part of University of Birmingham. All research that we carry out at KWRG is to better understand some of the problems faced by young people and their caregivers. The aim is to use the knowledge from research to create strategies to improve the care experience for everyone involved.

An outline of the project

The current project focuses on understanding the experiences of non-White care leavers who have experience of being part of a foster placement with a White family or of a family that is of a different race and/or ethnicity to them. The questions will focus on your experiences of belonging and difference. We want to understand what has been helpful in managing any differences and what has been difficult. We will be exploring areas such as noticing difference more generally e.g. what it felt like to be a child in care in a foster family. More specifically we will be interested understanding if/how race and ethnicity have had an impact on your life, including your experiences with your foster family, other professionals that were involved in your care, school and the community. Additionally, we want to understand how you interpret belonging and what experiences whilst in care and now as a care leaver has left you with a sense of belonging. We have created an informal interview schedule that has been co-developed with children who are currently in care and care leavers.

This topic is important as there is limited research into understanding the experiences of non-White care leavers. We feel it is important to give a space in the research to your voice and to be able to express how you feel and what would be helpful for future children in care who are going into similar experiences. However, this can be a difficult subject to talk about, so it is important that participants in the research feel they have an accessible method of talking about their experience that can support in telling the story. We will look to introduce 'photo voice' methods (discussed below) and have contacts with services that can support with emotional and psychological wellbeing if that is needed.

What are the potential benefits for participants for taking part?

With this research we hope to be able to understand your experiences of living in a family that was different to you with some focus on your experiences of belonging. We hope that the outcomes of this research will help relevant services to think about how people who have been in care have experienced and made sense of their placements. We want to understand some of the problems they face and importantly how foster families and professions can help to support the placement process to improve the likelihood of a more positive placement experience.

What will your participation involve?

Importantly, your participation is entirely voluntary. We will ask you to participate in the following activities.

1. **Photo voice**: Using your mobile phone you will be asked to take several pictures that relate to your experiences of being in care and understanding of belonging and difference in your life when in care and your life now that you have left care. These will then be used in the interview to help us make sense of your experiences. You will be given an information sheet on how to use the camera, including important etiquette in using the camera. You can still take part in the interview even if you have not taken any pictures.

2. **Individual interviews**: The interview will last around 1 hour and you can withdraw at any point before and during the interview. Should you wish to withdraw your data, you will have up to two weeks after your interview to do this.

Who will be involved in collecting the data?

Sarjan Grewal and members of the research team at the University of Birmingham.

Where will the research take place?

The research can take place at the university of Birmingham or alternatively the interview can be conducted remotely using a secure version of zoom. This will require access to a device to facilitate the interview, a downloaded version of the zoom app and a private place where you can take part in the interview.

Confidentiality

It is important to note a possible exception to confidentiality in line with the University's adult protection procedures. If researchers have any concerns about yours or other people's welfare, they have a duty to disclose this. Confidentiality may be broken to ensure safety.

Consent

You will be asked to provide consent before the research can begin. We would encourage you to ask any questions and to feel comfortable before you sign.

What kinds of information will be recorded and what will we do with it?

1. Your name and contact details

We will keep your name and contact details until the end of the study in September 2022. After this time, we will destroy this information unless you consent for us to contact you in the future with a view to participating in other studies.

When you enter the study, we will give you a unique participant number. We will use this number to identify all of the information we collect from you. The only link between this number and your name will be stored securely at the University of Birmingham. This means that after the study has ended, we can make sure that the information we have collected from you is made anonymous. We will then use a pseudonym in the write up of the report.

We will also keep your name and contact details on the written consent you will be asked to provide us with. We will keep an electronic copy of this securely for 10 years.

2. Photos

Any photos that are taken and used in the interview will be scanned and stored securely at the University. Only non-identifiable photos will be used in the write-up of the project and publishing in a relevant research journal. The original photos will be returned to you after the interview. If you do not want any non-identifiable photos to be used in the write-up and/or to be stored securely you can let the research team know after a maximum of one weeks after the interview.

3. Sound/ video recordings

The interviews will be sound recorded, or if they take place via Zoom and you are comfortable with keeping your camera on, the interview will be video recorded. These recordings will not be linked to the other information we collect. We will keep these securely at the University until we have transcribed them, which will be a maximum of 4 weeks after the interview. After this time, they will be destroyed.

4. Other information

All other information we collect will only be linked to you or your child by the unique participant number. We will use this information to publish reports and present at conferences. However, it will be published in an anonymous way and it will not be possible for anyone to trace this information to you or the young person.

All of the information we collect will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.

What will happen after that participation?

We expect to have finished with our data collection procedure by August 2022. Thereafter, you will receive a summarised report detailing outcomes of this research. If we pursue further steps with developed assessment/intervention materials, you can request that we keep you updated about further research activities.

Compensation

You will be reimbursed for any expenses incurred as a result of your participation (e.g. travel expenses if participating face to face). You will receive a £20 voucher of your choice. You will still receive this voucher if you attend the interview but then consequently decide you do not want to participate.

What if there is a problem?

Should you encounter any difficulties, or have further questions, please contact Sarjan Grewal at [redacted], or Kate Woodcock at [redacted] or [redacted] or the Research Governance Team on researchgovernance@contacts.bham.ac.uk for assistance.

Are there any risks that individuals taking part in the study might experience?

The topics discussed in this research can be difficult to engage with. There will be several points from the beginning when introducing the research to when the interview begins where you will be reminded that the research is voluntary and that you can withdraw at any point during the interview. Throughout the interview, we will ensure that you are happy to continue and will remind you that you do not need to answer the question if it feels uncomfortable.

Advice and support services is available below.

Name	Website	Email	Telephone
Mind Infoline	https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/ For mental health difficulties and support with treatment.	info@mind.org.uk	0300 123 3393
Samaritans	www.samaritans.org Support for mental health difficulties.	jo@samaritans.org	116 123
Papyrus	www.papyrus-uk.org Charity to support people thinking about taking their own life or worries about somebody else.	pat@ papyrus-uk.org	0800 068 4141
Frank	https://www.talktofrank.com/get-help/worried-about-a-child For information and support about drugs, their effects and the law.	frank@ talktofrank.com	0300 123 6600
The what? Centre'	https://www.thewhatcentre.co.uk/support-for-black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-bame-communities Mental health service for children and young people (13-18 years) Services provided specific to supporting Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities in Dudley	thewhatcentre@ hotmail.co.uk	+44(0) 1384 379992 (Stourbridge) or +44 (0) 1384 885488 (Dudley)
Rees Foundation	https://www.reesfoundation.org/ Help and support for care experienced individuals offering several projects from careers coaching, financial assistance, phone call support conversations among others.	contactus@reesfoundation.org	0330 094 5645

2.4 Appendix 2D: Participant consent form

Consent form for participant

Chief Investigator: Sarjan Grewal

Number:

Please fill in this form if you want to take part in our research.

Please circle the YES or NO to answer each question.

1	Have you read the information about our research or asked someone else to read it to you?	YES NO
2	Do you understand what the project is about?	YES NO
3	Have you asked all of the questions you want?	YES NO
4	Has someone answered all your questions so that you understand the answer?	YES NO
5	Do you know who you should ask if you think of any more questions?	YES NO
6	Do you understand that it is up to you if you take part or not, and that nobody else can decide for you?	YES NO
7	Do you understand that even if you tell us you want to take part now, you can still change your mind and stop?	YES NO
8	Do you understand that the interview(s) will be sound or video recorded?	YES NO
9	Do you understand that you can ask us to throw away the information we have collected from you up until two weeks after you take part?	YES NO
10	Do you understand that we will use the information we have collected to write reports and tell other people about what we have found, but the information we share will not contain your name?	YES NO
11	Do you understand the rules for using your camera?	YES NO
12	Are you happy to use your camera and talk about your pictures in the interview?	YES NO
13	Are you happy to speak to us about your experiences living in care?	YES NO

If **any** answers for questions 1-13 are a 'no' or you don't want to take part, do not sign your name!

Please write your name below **only** if you want to take part.

Your name: _____

Today's date: _____

At the end of the information sheet, we explained that you can provide your consent for us to keep your contact details after the end of the study to let you know about future research.

Are you willing for us to keep your contact details after the end of the study? (please circle)

YES NO

Please sign below.

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Email consent

The email sent to participants will provide the same details as the paper consent form. Participants will be asked to read the consent form and reply with a confirmation sentence which implies they have consented to all statements of consent.

Dear [name of participant],

Thank you for your interest in this research project with the University of Birmingham

Please read the information sheet and consent form attached to find out more about our research study. If you have any questions, please contact us.

If you have read the information sheet and consent form and you have said yes to every question, please copy and paste the following sentence:

"I confirm I have read the information sheet and consent form about the study and I consent to take part in this research."

If you have read the information sheet and consent form and you would like more information on the research or you are not sure what some of the questions in the consent form mean, please copy and paste the following sentence and we will try to support where we can:

"I confirm I have read the information sheet and consent form about the study and I would like more information on the research/question number (1-13) on the consent form."

Please also tell us whether you would be willing for us to keep your contact details after the end of the study using the following statement (deleting as appropriate):

"I would/ would not be willing for you to keep my contact details after the end of the study."

When we receive a response to this email with these statements, we can use this as your official consent to take part in the study.

Again, if you have any questions, please get in touch.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Kind regards,

Sarjan Grewal
Doctoral Researcher
Chief Investigator

Dr Kate Woodcock
Senior Lecturer
Director of KWRG

2.5 Appendix 2E: Participant debrief form

Participant debrief form

Thank you for taking part in this project.

We wanted to understand what it was like to be a child in care living in a foster family that looked different to you. By exploring difference and belonging we wanted to find out things you found helpful and unhelpful from your experiences with social workers and your previous carers and others.

Your experiences will help us to think about how we can support young people in care who are having similar experiences. This includes helping social workers and foster families understand how to take into account the needs and wishes of the young person in their care.

If you change your mind about letting us use your information, you can only ask us to throw away your information up to two weeks after your interview in the study.

If you have any questions, just email Sarjan Grewal at [redacted] or Kate on [redacted] or at [redacted]

Very importantly, if you have any concerns about the way that the study was conducted, you should contact the Research Governance Team on researchgovernance@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

This can be a really difficult subject to talk about, if you feel that some of the topics we have discussed today has had an impact on you and you would like some extra support, we can direct you to appropriate help services.

If you want somebody to talk to but you don't want to tell anyone how you feel right now, you can contact the following:

Name	Website	Email	Telephone
Mind Infoline	https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/ For mental health difficulties and support with treatment.	info@mind.org.uk	0300 123 3393
Samaritans	samaritans.org Support for mental health difficulties.	jo@samaritans.org	116 123
Papyrus	papyrus-uk.org Charity to support people thinking about taking their own life or worries about somebody else.	pat@papyrus-uk.org	0800 068 4141
Frank	https://www.talktofrank.com/get-help/worried-about-a-child For information and support about drugs, their effects and the law.	frank@talktofrank.com	0300 123 6600
The what? Centre'	https://www.thewhatcentre.co.uk/support-for-black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-bame-communities Mental health service for people aged 9-25 years old. Services provided specific to supporting Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities in Dudley	thewhatcentre@hotmail.co.uk	+44(0) 1384 379992 (Stourbridge) or +44 (0) 1384 885488 (Dudley)

2.6 Appendix 2F: Demographic questionnaire

Demographic questions

Name

_____

Date of Birth

_____

What is your age?

_____

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other (please specify)

_____

What is your ethnicity?

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background (please specify)

_____

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background (please specify)

_____

Mixed

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed Background (please specify)

_____

Other ethnic group

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group (please specify)

_____

What is your religion?

- No religion
- Christian
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Any other (Please specify)

_____

Do you speak any other language other than English?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify

_____

How old were you when you went into care?

_____

How many other foster placements have you had?

_____

2.7 Appendix 2G: Ethnical approval from University of Birmingham (including amended ethics application) and local authorities

Original ethical approval from the university of Birmingham

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
Research Support Group
C Block Dome
Aston Webb Building
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 8825
Email: [redacted]

3rd March 2021

Dr Kate Woodcock
School of Psychology
University of Birmingham

Dr Faiza Nasir
Looked After Children Services
[redacted]

Dear Dr Woodcock and Dr Nazir

Re: "Understanding the experiences of Non-White ethnic minority children in care in a current placement with a white foster family (The experiences of children in care of difference and belonging)"
Ethics reference ERN_19-1520AP7

Thank you for the above application to use Programme of Work ERN_19-1520P. This has now been considered by the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Ethical Review Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion for this application.

I would like to remind you that any substantive changes to the nature of the study as described in the Application for Ethical Review, and/or any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee's attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review.

Please be aware that whilst Health and Safety (H&S) issues may be considered during the ethical review process, you are still required to follow the University's guidance on H&S and to ensure that H&S risk assessments have been carried out as appropriate. For further information about this, please contact your School H&S representative or the University's H&S Unit at healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Mrs Susan Cottam
Research Ethics Manager
Research Support Services

Ethical approval of ammendment to empirical study incorporating care leavers

Susan Cottam (Research Support Services)
Mon 17/01, 16:45
Kate Woodcock (Psychology); Sarjan Grewal (ClinPsyD Clinical Psychol

Reply all

Action Items

Dear Dr Woodcock

Re: "Understanding the experiences of non-white ethnic minority care leavers who have experienced a placement with a white foster family or a family that is of a different race/ethnic background to them"
Application for amendment ERN_19-1520AP7A

Thank you for the above application for amendment, which was reviewed by the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Ethical Review Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I can confirm that this amendment now has full ethical approval.

Ethical approval from local research committees

Looked after children service 1

Research ethical approval and resources for research

RS [redacted]

Thu 01/04/2021 1:02 PM

Dear Sarjan

My colleague Sam has been through your ethics and thinks all is in order

So can you draft an email for me – which I will email directly onto social workers on your behalf – outlining the project, who you are looking for as participants, attaching all the resources they need like the information sheets for them as workers, for the foster carers and for the YP. All in one email please. Please be really clear about what type of child/situation you are looking for and the role of the social worker in helping you ask young people to take part. Please be really clear about the consent process, who needs to give consent and in what order.

Once I have this through I can distribute. Please make sure all this critical information is in the email body rather than asking SWs to look through a number of attachments to understand what help you are asking for,

[redacted]

Looked after children service 2

[redacted]

Sarjan,

For the avoidance of doubt, I confirm that I am satisfied with the project proposal and the governance arrangements that you have detailed in the documents that you have sent me. As a consequence, as long as you have the support of the council's service area responsible for the service users that you wish to include in your research, you are cleared to proceed with your research as required.

I trust this assists

Regards

[redacted]
Data Protection and Information Governance Manager

2.8 Appendix 2H: Pilot study with Children in care at the CIC council meeting

Children in care council meeting Questions and script using Microsoft teams and Mentimeter

Introduction

Introduce myself. Explain that My family used to foster young people in care. Explain my research in looking to understand the experiences of Minority ethnic children in care who are from a different ethnicity or race to their carers.

Importantly, this topic can be hard to talk about as we don't usually talk about ethnicity and sometimes people can be worried about saying the wrong thing. I'm wondering how I can overcome that and help people to feel safe talking about it.

It is really important to hear your opinions, so that I can start to understand what I should be focusing on when asking a person about their experiences of being in care. It is completely fine if you don't feel comfortable in taking part in the discussion today, thank you for listening either way!

If you feel stuck/unclear about what I am saying, please feel free to let me know or say something on the message board.

Bringing in the idea of difference:

Set out beginning point that we are all unique human beings and we can be different in many ways. We all look different to one another and that's a good thing. The world would be very boring if we were all the same.

I was wondering if you could first write down all of the ways that we can be different from each other…

Write down all the ways we can be different? – **Word cloud**

Size, shape, eye colour, skin colour, ethnicity,

How have you felt different from your foster family? – **Word cloud**

Have you got examples of times being different has had an impact on you? – **Open ended**

Prompts: - How has this impacted her school life? Friendships? How she sees herself? Town she lives in? Her family? **Day-to-day/long-term?**

If somebody was going to ask about your experiences of feeling different, what kind of questions would you want people to ask you? – **open ended**

Prompts: -Are there any times where you feel people have done a good job in asking about your experiences? – What did they say?

Scenario – All questions asked verbally and use of Mentimeter

Anita is a 16-year-old British Indian girl. She has been in and out of care since she was 8 years old. Anita is currently living with a foster family who are White British. The foster family she is currently in includes mum Jane and dad Bill and their son David. Anita's carers live in a small town and Anita struggles to find people who look like her, she also attends the local Secondary school where she finds it difficult to make friends because they tease her for looking different.

Knowing what we know about difference, can you tell me how Anita might be different to this family? - **Ask the group verbally and option for word cloud if people do not want to speak**

How do you think Anita might feel living in a family that look different to her? – **word cloud**

Can you think of experiences Anita may have that may impact her because of this difference? – **open ended**

Prompts: - How has this impacted her school life? Friendships? How she sees herself? Town she lives in? Her family? **Day-to-day/long-term?**

What questions could we ask Anita to understand her experiences better? - **open ended**

Do you think it can be helpful for Anita to know someone who looks like her? Why/Why not? - **Ask the group verbally – option for open ended question**

What things might her carers need to think about it in caring for Anita? – **Open ended**

How could Anita and her carers think about her difference together? – **Open ended**

What experiences might Anita have that differ to her carers or peers experiences? – **Open ended**

How did people feel in answering these questions?

This can be a really difficult topic to talk about, and I think you have all done a really great job. I think that future children in care that take part in this research with will benefit from your input today so thank you once again!

Findings

My notes from verbal conversations

So, when doing the bit about difference generally – ethnicity and colour of your skin was up and were larger in the word cloud meaning that several people put it on there

THEME: CHILDREN ARE THINKING ABOUT ETHNICITY AND RACE

They talked about school being a really important place where you can feel more different. Some teachers may have a good relationship with you whereas others may single you out more because you are different.

Some children when they find out you are a child in care and find out you are different they tease you for the fun of it.

THEME: SCHOOL AND IMPACT OF BEING A CHILD IN CARE

They identified that difference can have a strain on the relationship – wondering whether the family are thinking about them.

They said Anita could feel insecure and lonely – food/school/town/friendships can impact her. Being in a town that look different to her can have an impact on her – feeling lonely.

THEME: QUESTIONS AROUND AREA THEY LIVE IN, IMPACT ON THEM

The foster family need to consider Anita's feelings for example small things such as going for food asking if she was comfortable with having normal meat or whether the wanted halal –

so some question around respect for your beliefs and wants linked to their culture and their identity.

THEME: THINKING ABOUT IMPORTANT SOCIAL FACTORS SUCH AS FOOD – QUESTIONS AROUND WHETHER THE YOUNG PERSONS CULTURE AND VALUES ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT (EXAMPLE OF EATING HALAL FOOD).

Social workers and teams can be more informed about Anita's background and this can be a sign of more care – so some questions around how services around her talk to her about difference, whether the young persons culture/identity has ever been discussed with her – whether that would be important for the young person – whether they would like that.

THEME: QUESTIONS AROUND TEAM AROUND YOUNG PERSON E.G. SOCIAL WORKERS AND WHETHER DIFFERENCE AND EXPERIENCES COMING FROM A DIFFERENT RACE/ETHNICITY IS DISCUSSED – IF SO WHATS THAT LIKE; IF NOT; WOULD IT BE SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAPPEN, WHY?

For Anita having someone who looks like her can be helpful to relate to and somebody she can trust. They reflected that this is similar for them when they see another child in care. Trust is important – having somebody to relate to is important.

THEME: QUESTIONS AROUND WHETHER THERE IS SOMEONE THAT SHE CAN RELATE TO. WHO AND WHY.

Microsoft teams Comments and Mentimeter results

KEY: The larger the word the more people that were writing it.

THEME: CHILDREN ARE THINKING ABOUT ETHNICITY AND RACE

How have you felt different from your foster family? – **Word cloud**

- Question possibly threatening
- Wanting to say yeah they have difference e.g. autism BUT they get along – maybe they found that threatening. As if they are on trial for other kids being different rather themselves. E.g. we have different opinions but we respect each other or there are some kids that are autistic but we get along etc. Like they wanted to justify to me that they have no problems with others who are different.

We all have different points of view- this is for the website. Also we can have different beliefs and different interests

not really, i mean we have different oppinions but we get allong pretty well. like my circumstances were different the theres.

i live with children that have autism so we are completly different but we get along really well

i live in a childrens home

errm my friend lives with carers who are a different skin colour and ethnicity

Have you got examples of times being different has had an impact on you? – **Open ended**

Myy circumstances were a lot more different- like I had differeent iews oot just about my scial and educational life but also about myself.

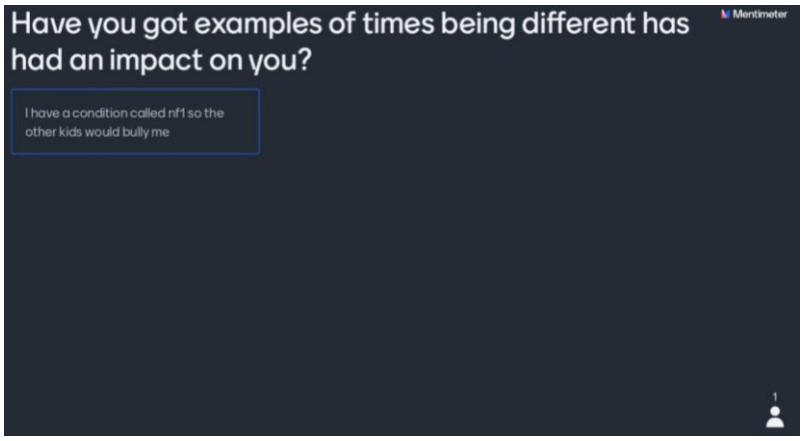
yes erm when people at school found out about my situation they laughed

yh so we get on really well but there are time where one of the children will not stop talking and it gets on my nerves

I agrree completely- we all have ddifferent situations and people need to accept that.

what i meant was they dont stop talking even if i am trying to concentrate on something and it is really annoying

THEME: SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE – FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS TO TEACHERS – FOCUS ON WHETHER PEOPLE ASK YOUNG PERSON QUESTIONS ABOUT DIFFERENCE AND HOW THEY FEEL – WHETHER THEY HAVE SUPPORT IN ANSWERING THAT QUESTION – WHAT THEY SAY…



ANITA SCENARIO

How do you think Anita might feel living in a family that look different to her? – **word cloud**

Difference between ethnicity and skin colour, she probably feel excluded and helpless

the foster carers could treat their biological child better than how they treat her

as she is a CHILD IN CARE AND OF A DIFFERENT ETHNICITY

THEME: ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP TO BIRTH CHILD/HOW THE FOSTER PARENTS RELATIONSHIP DIFFERS TO THEM COMPARED TO THEIR OWN CHILD

She might feel different because she is in care.

THEME: FOCUSING ON BEING IN CARE MORE GENERALLY

Can you think of experiences Anita may have that may impact her because of this difference? **– open ended**

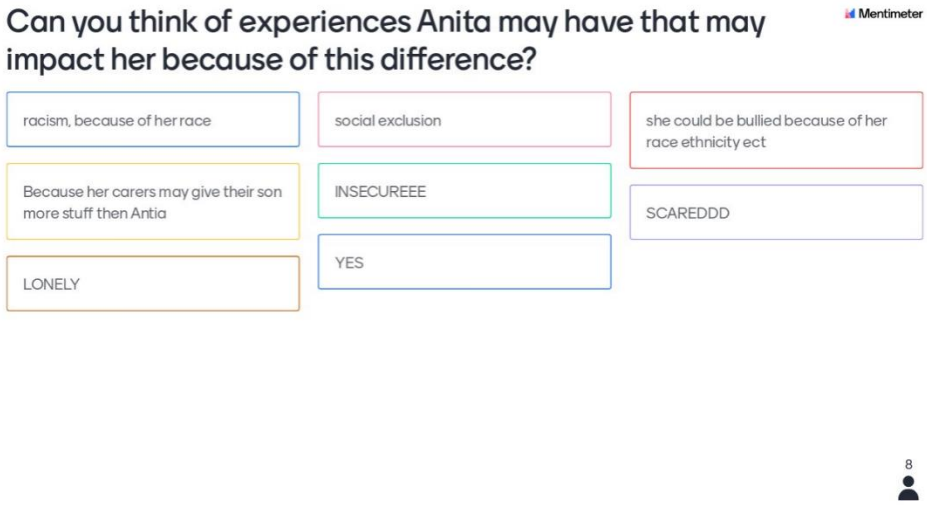
Prompts: - How has this impacted her school life? Friendships? How she sees herself? Town she lives in? Her family? **Day-to-day/long-term?**

people finding out and bieng socially excluded in school

THEME: AGAIN SCHOOL IS IMPORTANT. INCLUDING BULLYING

People might bully her and feel like that it is acceptable to make her feel excluded and lonely for me i always struggle to make friends because of medical needs i have

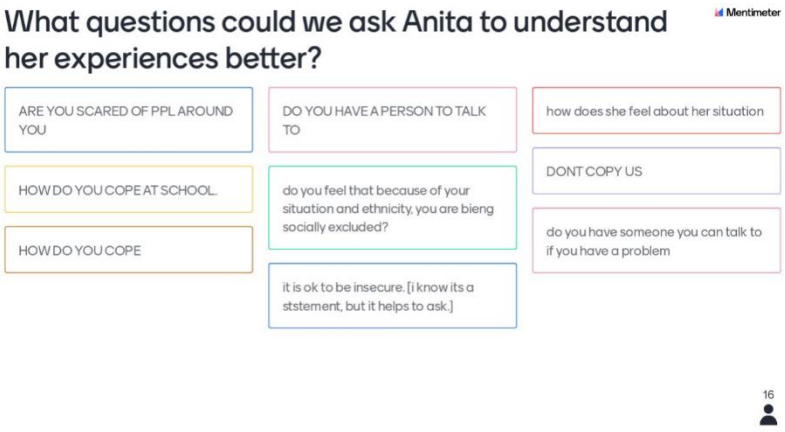
THEME: IF THERE ARE ANY OTHER REASONS THEY FEEL THEY MAY BE EXCLUDED SUCH AS MEDICAL REASONS.



THEME: QUESTIONS AROUND DISCRIMINATION, HOW THAT IS HANDLED. RELATIONSHIPS AT SCHOOL AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL, WHETHER SHE IS BULLIED BECAUSE OF HER RACE/ETHNICITY/OTHER.

THEME: RELATIONSHIP TO BIOLOGICAL SON, IMPACT ON YOUNG PERSON.

THEME: HOW PERSON FEELS WITHIN THEMSELVES



THEME: ASKING MORE GENERALLY HOW PERSON FEELS ABOUT PLACEMENT

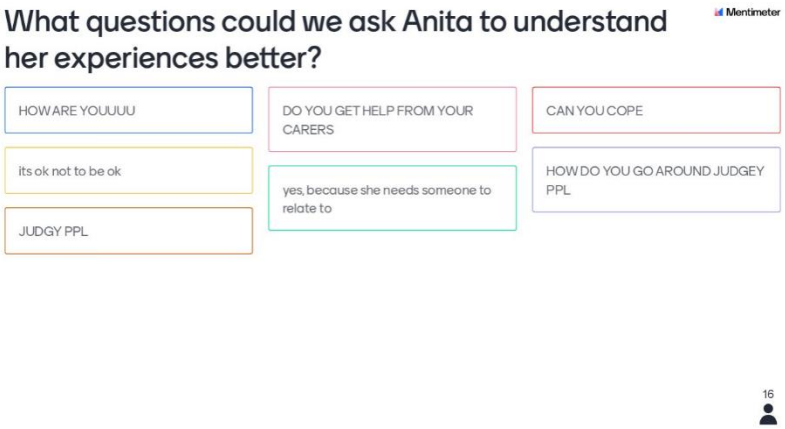
THEME: RELATED TO SCHOOLING

THEME: NOT JUST ASKING ABOUT WHAT PROBLEMS THERE ARE BUT WHAT ARE THEIR COPING MECHANISMS/WHO THEY TALK TO/HOW DO THEY HELP THEMSELVES ETC.

THEME: FOCUS ON SUPPORT CIRCLES.

THEME: INTRODUCING STATEMENTS RATHER THAN QUESTIONS…

THEME: FOCUS IN ON RELATIONSHIP OF ETHNICITY AND EXCLUSION..



2.9 Appendix 2I: Care leavers interview schedule

[Throughout the interview, use a term for BAME that is familiar to the young person. This could be 'ethnic minority, 'minority' and is discussed with the young person at the beginning]

Research Information – Ask participant about the appropriate terminology e.g. care leaver/care experienced/something else or neither.

[Explain information in the information sheet related to study including purpose of the interview, consent, confidentiality, risk, withdrawal, etc.]

Example script:

The researcher introduces themselves. Thank you for coming today, the aim today is to understand your experiences as an ethnic minority child under the care of the local authority living with a family that are from a different ethnicity to you in foster placement.

Cambridge Dictionary ethnic minority: These are a group of people of a particular race or nationality living in a country or area where most people are from a different race or nationality.

Importantly, this topic can be hard to talk about as we don't usually talk about ethnicity and difference **and you may or may not have thought about this in relation to your experiences being in the care of the local authority.** It is important that you feel safe to say what you feel, if you feel you want to stop at any point please let me know and we can pause or discontinue the interview. If you need to discontinue the interview you won't miss out on your voucher and we can also help you to find the right support if you feel you need it.

If you feel stuck/unclear about what I am saying, please feel free to let me know or say something on the messaging board (if interview is taking place virtually)

(If interview is taking place virtually interviewer should also add: You can also turn your camera off if that makes it easier in talking about your experiences – they can raise their hand virtually if their camera is off and they need to pause).

- Remind participants that they do not have to answer the question if they do not want to, they can request to move onto the next one.

Opening questions – getting to know – Check that this is a safe space

So, this section of the interview will be more of a generic overview of getting to know you and your experiences. We will then think together about your experiences you have had with a foster family that was of a different race or ethnic background to you.

Importantly these questions are a guide and if you feel it would be important to touch on something else then please feel free to open that discussion.

I expect that we will spend between 60-90 minutes altogether depending on what comes up for you. Please let me know if you would like to take a 5 minute break at any point.

[Build rapport and ICEBREAKER]

1. Tell me about yourself:
    - What is your name?
    - How old are you?
2. What hobbies do you have? Do you work? Important people in your life?
    - What's do you like doing? (e.g. favourite TV programme/game etc.)

[Opening discussion about belonging and difference more generally then specifically focusing on race/ethnicity]

<u>Understanding Belonging</u>

Ask participant what the term 'belonging' means to them. interviewer scaffolds after answer/if participant is struggling Interviewer can then read off the statement below.

- What does belonging mean to you?
- Have your experiences/definitions of belonging changed over time? (When in care and when out of care?)

Belonging is a sense of feeling like you are an important member of a group such as family members, friends and the community. Feeling that you belong is really important as it can help build your identity and better able to deal with challenges and difficulties.

The participant should then be asked the following questions. The picture task was about belonging and difference. Asking them to share their pictures...

3. Can you tell me a little about why you chose these pictures?
    - If the participant could not find pictures, ask what images come up for them live in the session as they talk about belonging. You could also explore whether there are any items in the room they connect with that brings a sense of belonging if they are carrying out the appointment online.
4. Can you think of ways that you have felt belonging in your life?
    - **Prompt:** Have you got examples? – pictures? (Shared experiences such as things we like eating, playing and listening to music).
5. What is it about these things/pictures make you feel like you belong?
    - **Prompt:** What happens to your relationship?
6. Are there any pictures/memories in care or as a care leaver that stand out for you ?
    - **Prompt:** What emotions come up for you?

<u>Understanding difference</u>

Now that we understand belonging, it is also important to say that we are all unique human beings and we can be different in many ways. We can still belong even though we may have differences. We all look different to one another and that's a good thing. The world would be very boring if we were all the same.

I was wondering if you could first tell me all of the ways that we can be different from each other…

1. Write down all the ways we can be different? (option for prompts e.g. eye colour, size etc.)
    - **Prompt:** - Does the participant notice how they can be different to the interviewer? (age, colour of their skin, ethnicity, eye colour, height etc).
2. How would you define your ethnicity?
3. Have you got examples of times your ethnicity or being different had an impact on you when in care?
    - **Prompts**: - How has this impacted your school life? Friendships? How she sees herself? Town she lives in? Her family? **Day-to-day?**

[The interviewer should not follow the interview schedule verbatim and should be flexible to where the young person leads them, particularly in relation to the last question]

[Interviewer should check in with participant wellbeing at various points in the interview at their discretion – 'These questions can be difficult to answer, how are you feeling?']

The next section is going to be more focused on your experiences of being in a foster family that is of a different race/ethnic background to you. We will explore your experiences with the foster family, school and the community. If there are any other areas you would like to think about please feel free to discuss them.

Generic questions about foster care journey – Moved from 'opening questions' section.

1. How long were you in care? (when did you go into care and when did you leave?)
2. How many placements did you have altogether (this could include foster families and residential settings)? → How many of a different race?
3. Do you still have contact with any of your foster families?

The foster family

1. Do you have a foster family or a few foster families in mind where you were of a different race and/or ethnicity to them?
2. Tell me about who was in your foster families?
3. How long did you live with each family?
4. How would you generally describe the ethnic/racial make-up of your foster families and their extended family?
5. Thinking back were you aware of looking different to your foster family?
    a. Were you aware of differences between you and your foster family?
        i. **Prompts:** What were these differences? Did you think other people saw these differences? Did anyone comment on you looking different to your foster family? (What did they say)
    b. What things did you share and are similar with your foster family?
        i. **Prompt:** This might be things you do together.
6. What was it like being in public with your foster family?
        i. **Prompt:** Did you think about what others think? Has anyone spoken to you about these differences?
7. Did anyone ever speak to you about these differences and how you are experiencing the placement? (e.g., because of your ethnicity/race).

i. **Prompt:** What did they say? How did it make you feel? (supported/unsupported); Can you give me an example? (What happened?) If not, what stopped you?
ii. **Prompt:** Is there anyone in your foster family you can go to? Can you go to anyone in your care team? If no, is that something you would have liked? (Why?)

School

School is a really important place for learning and making friends.

1. With the foster family/families you have in mind, tell me a bit about what school was like.
2. Who you spend time with at school?
    i. **Prompt:** Do they look the same as you? Are they different? How?
    ii. How does that make you feel? Does it matter to you if your friends look similar to you? Why/Why not?
3. Did you ever feel different at school?
    i. **Prompt:** How did you feel different? Were there any stand out memories that come to mind?
4. What was your relationship with your teachers like?
    i. **Prompt:** Did you have Teachers at your school that were from the same race and/or ethnic background as you? If yes/no - how does that make you feel?
5. Did conversations about your race/ethnic identity ever come up at school?
    i. **Prompt:** Do you have a specific example? Who did you speak to?
    ii. Did anyone ever comment on why you looked different to your foster parents?

Community

1. What was the racial/ethnic background of the community you lived in?
    i. **Prompt:** What was that like? Was it important for you to connect with people that looked like you? Why?
2. Do you ever go to places with your foster family where there are people that are from a similar race/ethnicity to you?
    i. **Prompt:** Where do you go? How are the people similar? How do you feel about that?
    ii. If not, is that something you would have wanted to do? Why?

Belonging to the foster family

We spoke earlier about belonging and shared experiences with your foster family.

1. What are the things that helped you to feel like a family together?
2. What did you enjoy about being with your family the most?
3. What things about your carers ethnicity have you enjoyed the most?
4. What about your ethnicity do you think your carers hoped they learnt about you?
    - **Prompt:** (If not) What would you like to teach them about your ethnicity and your background?

Belonging to the biological family and culture

Our own culture and understanding of where we come from can come from our parents. I was also wondering about experiences with your own parents and culture

1. Did you have much contact with your parents? (more with one than another, what was that like for you) – Are they the same ethnicity as you?
2. Did you have contact with any of your family? (What was that like?)
3. What other things are important for you in your culture?

Leaving care

1. How have the experiences we have talked about impacted you as an adult? E.g. What is your relationship like with your ethnicity now compared to then, have you learnt anything new about your ethnicity that you didn't know as a child.
2. Have your experiences of belonging changed since you have left care?
    - **Prompt:** How? What has changed/What would you like to change?
3. What advice would you give to services who are supporting a placement where the child is of a different race and/or ethnic background to the foster family?
4. What advice would you give to a foster family looking after a child in this situation?
5. What advice would you give to a child living with foster carers now?

Final Question: Is there anything else that we haven't discussed yet but you feel it is important to understanding your experiences?

How are you feeling?

End of questions

[The interviewer should go through the debrief form with the participant, asking them how they are feeling about their participation and directing to appropriate services if any psychological distress is observed]

[The interviewer should also ask participants which photos they are happy to be used in the final report – explaining that all photographs will be non-identifiable and that any photographs not allowed to be used will be described in text form]

2.10 Appendix 2J: Photo task before the interview

How to stay safe taking pictures

We are very interested in your experiences of being in care with a family that is different to you. Finding words to speak about race and difference can sometimes be very difficult and bring about a lot of difficult feelings.

One way to help with the process is through a method called photovoice. This involved taking pictures on your mobile phone to help you to tell your story!

The exercise:

As well as thinking about differences, we are also going to explore the importance of belonging and <u>what the word means to you</u>. Using your mobile phones or images from the internet before the interview we would like you to:

1. Take photos that show what belonging meant to you when you were in care and now as a care leaver. This can be pictures of people, objects or anything that you would like to explore further in the interview.
2. Identify items/images that give a sense of what it felt like to be in a foster family that was of a different race/ethnicity to you. This could also be drawings or other creative ways you feel you could share this.

We are interested in your interpretations of belonging and difference now as a care leaver and what it was like during your time in care. Before the interview we will ask you to send the pictures you have taken via email these can then be shared and discussed on the video call platform.

PLEASE NOTE: <u>If you would like to participate in this part of the interview you don't have to discuss both parts of the task.</u>

If you are taking pictures of people, please ask for their permission before taking a picture.

Taking pictures of this nature can bring up a lot of difficult emotions. Your wellbeing is our priority. Therefore, **you don't have to participate in this part of the interview if you don't want to.** We can offer a space to explore your experiences in the interview and also signpost to services that can support you.

2.11 Appendix 2K: Example of initial coding

Importance of name pronunciation History and culture The nickname – he is something more if asked. Story telling through history Name connected to lineage. An important name. Clear sense of understanding who he is and where he is from - 'always' Has he been told his story about his lineage – how did this happen? 'I never liked' – emphasised important feelings. Making himself more digestible for others Is this how he relates to others? Making it easier for others to understand him? Forward thinking	S – cool, so I suppose the first section is essentially getting to know you, this first period will be a generic overview of your experiences we'' then kind of think more specifically you've had with a foster family you had in mind that was of a different ethnic race or ethnicity to yourself or a couple of families you have in mind. Importantly these questions are a guide so if you feel if would be important to touch on something else that links to that or even not link to that feel free to open that discussion, again this is your space umm. I think this interview will take around 60-90 minutes. I don't expect it to go over 90 minutes. Please let me know if you would like to take breaks in between, do you have any questions before we start **T- no** S- I guess the first part is if you can tell me about yourself, we have got an idea of your name and you said something about your history, there is a meaning of crown behind that. **T- yeah, my family name _____ is from, like I said, so my four fathers they were kings, actually one of my mums brothers just became a king a few months ago so umm, kings run in the family. My actual name, so '___' is a nickname because a lot of people can't pronounce my actual name, '____' is the crown and the '_____' means coming from abroad like yeah something different.** S- Wow, '_____' and you said your uncle has recently been crowned **T- yeah** S- And is this something that you have got to know recently or is this something that you have always known about your ancestory and history. **T- I have always known, I have seen pictures of my father, I have seen the drawings, I have seen my father with the crown on his head, I have only seen the pictures around the house umm and its not really been interesting for me, I didn't really like the, I never liked the '___' in front of my name, I just liked the '____' but over time I just got used to the '__' because its on my passport someone rang my name around my house and said 'is this you' on your passport it says '___' and here is says '____' so I kind of got used to adding the '___' because it just makes it easier. So being in the future, maybe something I will be interested in, like I said my mums brother just got crowned. Sometime in the future they might want me to but we will see (laughs)**	Access to stories of culture and family history Emotional weight of cultural history Access to stories of culture and lineage Separating self from culture A clear connection to culture

Presents the longstanding pressure to become king

Pressure of lineage

Responsibility of kindship

It feels like a lot of pressure - He is working hard to keep this pressure from history down.

It is as if he has no choice but to become King – a demand from him.

A role he has as well as being care experienced. Constant reminders of this pressure

Attempts to distance from lineage. A demanding lineage

'Always' 'over and over again' – an ongoing pressure he can't avoid.

Indication of his need to give back to the community

What does this say about his character – is this linked to his difficulties in care?

He is familiar with suffering and wants to help.

S- So there is some linkage to your ancestry and history that is really there for a long time, not just after you left care but sounds like whilst you were in care. And you said something about not wanting that '___' part why was that?

T – It's because of the king, I was never interested in it, I never wanted to be part of it really, I just didn't really know, I was quite young, I didn't know what it means and what the responsibility is having that '___' in your name and maybe in the future they might want me you know, something like that and I probably don't want to do it, so I probably try and remove and you know separate myself. As I got older I got used to having the '____' there.

S- That's really interesting, was it important to you, this is a question later down in the line but actually it feels important to ask it now, was it important to you to have that link to your ancestory, to your cuture early on in your life or do you feel, it sounds like there is a pressure to it, this crown that you potentially may have, would you say it was still important to connect to that early on in your life?

T - yeah, I think from since I was a child everyone has always said well one day you are going to be the king, one day you're going to be this or that you're going to take over your father so it is always there since I was a child, pictures all around the house and everything its always something that they keep telling me over and over again and I have tried to remove the '____' from my name and it keeps coming back.

S- So it sounds like something you didn't want to associate with

T- yeah I didn't want to, yeah.

S- were there any parts of your cuture that you did want to connect with or was it all grouped into one?

T - I would say so grouped into one because the idea of being a king is you are scared to have advantaged to things in life, you get to have people walk for you and ceremonies like that and it is not doing anything for the community (laughs) you are a glorified person. I don't want to be a king if I am not going to change something, Im not going to make a difference you know whats the point, I don't want to be king of a place where people are suffering.

The pressures of culture and lineage

The pressure of family history.

Distancing /choosing to not carry the name – active decision making

Experience of external cultural pressures

Efforts to remove pressures of culture

Attempts to separate self from lineage

Making cultural choices

The caring self – giving back

2.12 Appendix 2I: Emerging superordinate and subordinate themes

Emergent theme	Similar themes
A sense of feeling separate, disconnected, in part being care experienced but also from other factors that lead to feeling disconnected – skin colour. Having to explain the spelling of her name to people constantly Being sensitive to race related issues Noticing difference from being in foster family In part feeling different due to being care experienced connects with being black and different	An isolated and abandoned self A separation story Absence of choice An isolated self Shut off from the world Muddling through leaving care A separated self – not being taken Awareness of colour and difference A new unwanted racialised perception of the world Feeling different – disclosing care status and race An absence of care and love – alternative motivations of foster carers Awareness of 'obvious' racial difference Frustrations of not belonging The isolated self Awareness of racial difference and stigma in society The visible feeling of difference Separated self Feeling different Abandoned and fighting for survival The weight of leaving care Figuring out adult life alone Feeling homeless A vulnerable self An innocent vulnerable self
Seeking belonging – care experienced/diversity in school Being appreciated and having choice	School as an important space Having choice- Playing videogames, football and school are important Care status transcending race Appreciated and noticed self – choosing education School as a sources of support School as a place to belong and to be rewarded and noticed A story of being cared for consistently Connection to memories/ the past as a source of comfort A wish to be understood and heard
Inconsistent support from services; a denial of cultural needs Absence of support linked to racially bias system not taking into account cultural needs	Half-hearted attempts from foster families to understand culture Inconsistent attempts to support cultural connection The questioning of others motivations The privileges of being White The privilege of being White

	Responsibility of race difference conversations The neglecting system The unique experiences of a non-White care leaver – the racist system The racially bias system The racially bias system Absence of race conversations A distrust of the system The failing system - the abandoned self
Seeking opportunities to be heard and given a choice – listening to cultural needs and respecting relationship to culture Seeking diversity – accepted for background Foster carers and systems to be interested and actively engaged with culture Being included Relationship to culture	Emotional weight of cultural history Separating self from culture Distancing /choosing to not carry the name – active decision making Experience of external cultural pressures Efforts to remove pressures of culture Making cultural choices A wish to be involved A wish to be heard and given choice Being recognised and seen Choosing to connect with diversity Diversity as more welcoming Seeking diversity A wish to be a part of the family. A wish to be included Feeling wanted A wish for foster carer investment A consistent connection to birth family A wish to belong and feel connected A wish to be included and cared for during and after care Food as important to culture
What needs to happen – directed by interview Present data in two parts - Themes developed We also asked - small section on what could be differently – different question itself.	A wish to be cared for and accepted for his background Racial differences as an additional difficulty to the care experience Consistent cultural parenting Food as a connection to culture A wish for foster carers to be interested and engaged with culture Being consistently included in family rituals and extended relationships keeping connection to culture Showing care and love

2.13 Appendix 2M: Summary case vignettes

Participant 1

Participant 1 seems to have this sense of abandonment. To add context he has a relationship with his birth mother and siblings and speaks to his birth mother quite frequently. He has a difficult relationship with his own culture, seeing it as a pressure to become king. He wants to push away from it and struggles with the pressures and demands of him which don't align with his values. Living in a White foster family left him feeling disconnected and isolated, he separated himself out from the family and started as part of feeling different was noticing the racial and cultural differences. This went into food, how the family reacted with him and noticing visible differences in school and in the community. He found a sense of belonging and connection at school which was more diverse. He found himself having relationships with mixed-race or black children but would get along with everybody. He noticed racial differences but he felt appreciated and cared for by teachers and he felt seen. His best times was in the residential care home where he chose the things he enjoyed such as football, gaming with other children in care. There was something about being a child in care and the same as him which transcended the racial differences. He felt that his race was acknowledged and his cultural needs were too in the residential home as he was consulted. This sense of feeling different and isolated in his foster family was influenced by half-hearted attempts by the foster family to be receptive of his culture and needs. They were inconsistent and he gave one example of being taken to a Nigerian restaurant and given rice and peas. He feels there is systemic racism where his needs isn't taken into account and that White children in care get better experiences leading to a racially bias system. Despite his difficult relationship with his own culture possibly due to the pressures of becoming King, he does speak of the importance of wanting agency in choosing what parts of his culture he experiences, he wishes to be listened to and for foster care systems to take the initiative to introduce and think about cultural needs and to do this consistently. He feels more comfortable in a diverse population, but importantly he wants to be heard, taken seriously and involved in family outings, being seen as a family member.

Maybe because of pressures of culture – not having a choice

Participant 2

Participant 2 speaks about several points in her life where she feels disconnected and different from her foster family. She speaks about the obvious differences of skin colour and this related to her foster carer and conversations she has had to have with the birth children of the foster family. She has to answer difficult questions from the community about why she is different and has to introduce her own cultural needs. There is a lack of support from services to think about this, or initially thinking about this and not continuing it during her time at the foster family. She speaks about a racist system that doesn't know how to support. In the middle of all of that there is a sense of belonging, of connecting with people that invested in her, that understood her, speaking openly about taking into account not just her race but her story. Thinking about foster carers who are showing they care – importance of being involved with family rituals. (**linked with Participant 5 saying at the end that need to take into account other factors other that race or participant 1 wanting to be a part of the family**). As a care leaver the freedom to choose and have a place to call home is important, trying to access the normal family life creates space for belonging but this also potentially gives space to choose her culture, to explore and be curious, going abroad or choosing diverse friendships but making choices to connect with all forms of culture across the world not just her own. She has a wish to go back to her family but barriers remain for her to do so although this is not explained further.

Participant 3

Participant 4 seemed to share experiences of abandonment and detachment from friends and family. She can experience being disconnected from people in her life and found ways to keep hold of friends leading to some dependence. She is choosing not to follow her religion anymore. She has stories of her birth family and access to her birth mother. She is interested and curious for new relationships, she negotiates her care status but ultimately seeks people who care and can provide support to her. She acknowledges that the majority of her friends are from minority backgrounds although does not see ethnic matching as always important, there is something about how she is seen and heard in a relationship. How she is taken care of which leads to an experience of belonging and new definitions of family including new family rituals such as giving and receiving gifts.

Participant 4

Participant 5 seems to have these experiences of abandonment feeling different and disconnected from the people in her life during care. She separates this out in not identifying with the Whiteness in her environment, of consistently To add context she does not have a relationship with her birth family and particularly her Pakistani side. She has more of a relationship with her White Irish mother's family. Feeling different linked to the colour of her skin and the pronunciation of her name. There is this theme in connection to systemic racism, a purposeful separation from this participant from her heritage and connection to Pakistani culture. Pakistani side of her family not seen as important, linked to blocks of Whiteness. However, from this in care and having left care there was this attraction to re-reacting and choosing the 'little family', finding opportunities to define family and creating opportunities of forming a family after leaving care. This sense of wanting to be seen and cared for. For her there is this specific focus on re-creating the 'Pakistani' family in her everyday life, in the community as a care leaver, during care seeking to find the Pakistani friendship group but not fitting in there as she was too White, or in a school of predominantly White children finding the only diverse children and being friends with them. Then during care going to her friend's family and experiencing cultural traditions e.g. Diwali – even though it isn't her culture it possibly gave her a sense of the Pakistani family she didn't get the opportunity of experiencing. Whilst in care and leaving care

2.14 Appendix 2N: Merging participants superordinate and subordinate themes using case vignettes

- The odd one out – being in care and also being a different race to the family; wanting to be cared for
- Systemic racism and the barriers to cultural connection – foster carer differences/professionals
- Accessing agency – Choosing personal pathway to belonging/ life decisions to seek belonging/Choosing the pathway to belonging
    - New definitions of family or **Finding the 'little family'** – a wish to care and be cared for
    - An attraction to diversity – in care and out of care/ an attraction to diversity – relationship to own culture – promoting a sense of belonging
    - Access and connection to birth family culture

Themes	SUBTHEMES
The odd one out	Separate and isolated (impact)
Systemic racism and the barriers to cultural connection	
Choosing the pathway to belonging	Finding the 'little family'
	An attraction to diversity – making choices on how they interact with diversity/their culture
	Relationship to? Access and connection to? Birth family stories

- The odd one out – being in care and also being a different race to the family; wanting to be cared for

P1 - sense of abandonment; Living in a White foster family left him feeling disconnected and isolated, he separated himself out from the family and started as part of feeling different was noticing the racial and cultural differences. noticing visible differences in school and in the community
P2 - disconnected and different from her foster family. She speaks about the obvious differences of skin colour and this related to her foster carer and conversations she has had to have with the birth children of the foster family. She has to answer difficult questions from the community about why she is different and has to introduce her own cultural needs.
P3 - abandonment and detachment from friends and family. She can experience being disconnected from people in her life
P4 - abandonment feeling different and disconnected from the people in her life during care. She separates this out in not identifying with the Whiteness in her environment, of consistently. feeling different linked to the colour of her skin and the pronunciation of her name. In a school of predominantly White children

- New definitions of family or **Finding the 'little family' –** a wish to care and be cared for

P1 - He noticed racial differences but he felt appreciated and cared for by teachers and he felt seen. His best times was in the residential care home where he chose the things he enjoyed such as football, gaming with other children in care. There was something about being a child in care and the same as him which transcended the racial differences
P2 - In the middle of all of that there is a sense of belonging, of connecting with people that invested in her, that understood her, speaking openly about taking into account not just her race but her story. Thinking about foster carers who are showing they care – importance of being involved with family rituals. have a place to call home is important, trying to access the normal family life creates space for belonging
P3 - She is interested and curious for new relationships, she negotiates her care status but ultimately seeks people who care and can provide support to her. How she is taken care of which leads to an experience of belonging and new definitions of family including new family rituals such as giving and receiving gifts.
P4 - this attraction to re-reacting the 'little family', finding opportunities to define family and creating opportunities of forming a family after leaving care. This sense of wanting to be seen and cared for.

- A connection to diversity – in care and out of care/ an attraction to diversity – relationship to own culture

P1 - He found a sense of belonging and connection at school which was more diverse. He found himself having relationships with mixed-race or black children but would get along with everybody.
P2 - potentially gives space to choose her culture, to explore and be curious, going abroad or choosing diverse friendships but making choices to connect with all forms of culture across the world not just her own. She has a wish to go back to her family but barriers remain for her to do so although this is not explained further.
P3 - She acknowledges that the majority of her friends are from minority backgrounds
P4 - For her there is this specific focus on re-creating the 'Pakistani' family in her everyday life, in the community as a care leaver. Finding the only diverse children and being friends with them. Then during care going to her friend's family and experiencing cultural traditions e.g. Diwali – even though it isn't her culture it possibly gave her a sense of the Pakistani family she didn't get the opportunity of experiencing.

- Systemic racism and the barriers to cultural connection – foster carer differences/professionals

P1 - This sense of feeling different and isolated in his foster family was influenced by half-hearted attempts by the foster family to be receptive of his culture and needs. They were inconsistent and

he gave one example of being taken to a Nigerian restaurant and given rice and peas. He feels there is systemic racism where his needs isn't taken into account and that White children in care get better experiences leading to a racially bias system.
P2 - There is a lack of support from services to think about this, or initially thinking about this and not continuing it during her time at the foster family. She speaks about a racist system that doesn't know how to support
P3 – She does not see ethnic matching as always important,
P4 - There is this theme in connection to systemic racism, a purposeful separation from this participant from her heritage and connection to Pakistani culture. Pakistani side of her family not seen as important, linked to blocks of Whiteness. During care seeking to find the Pakistani friendship group but not fitting in there as she was too White

- Access and connection to birth family culture

P1 - To add context he has a relationship with his birth mother and siblings and speaks to his birth mother quite frequently. He has a difficult relationship with his own culture, seeing it as a pressure to become king. He wants to push away from it and struggles with the pressures and demands of him which don't align with his values
P2 -
P3 - She has stories of her birth family and access to her birth mother.
P4 - To add context she does not have a relationship with her birth family and particularly her Pakistani side. She has more of a relationship with her White Irish mother's family.

- A wish for agency

P1 - he does speak of the importance of wanting agency in choosing what parts of his culture he experiences, he wishes to be listened to and for foster care systems to take the initiative to introduce and think about cultural needs and to do this consistently. But importantly he wants to be heard, taken seriously and involved in family outings, being seen as a family member.
P2 - As a care leaver the freedom to choose
P3 - keep hold of friends leading to some dependence; choosing to not follow her religion anymore.
P4 - this attraction to re-reacting and choosing the 'little family'

2.15 Appendix 2O: Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale (CRFS)

List of Scales

*Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale (**CRFS)***

Foster children have different cultures. Culture tells us how groups of people are different, whether they are from a different race, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, gender, sexual orientation, social class, or other ways that influence values, beliefs, views, and behavior. Below is a list of activities involved in fostering children of different cultures. For each statement, please select the response that best explains the level of effort you are willing to give to do the following activities.

SCORE (1-5) 1 = None 2 = Little 3 = Some 4 = A lot 5 = Whatever it takes	Mother	Father	
			1. Seeking help from people who share his/her culture.
			2. Finding out about the skin and hair care that are best for a foster child.
			3. Learning how to tell if others are unkind or unfair to a foster child because of his/her culture.
			4. Finding places where a foster child can go to get his/her cultural needs met.
			5. Celebrating holidays and events important to a foster child.
			6. Buying toys, books, and dolls that are like a foster child's culture.
			7. Showing interest in the art of a foster child's culture.
			8. Learning how to lessen the effects of racism or discrimination on a child.
			9. Sharing helpful ideas with others who have raised children of different cultures.
			10. Trying recipes from a foster child's culture.
			11. Learning how to help a foster child effectively cope with acts of prejudice and racism.
			12. Appreciating clothing styles that are important to a foster child's culture.
			13. Finding out about health issues that are common in a foster child's culture.
SCORE (1-5) 1 = None 2 = Little 3 = Some 4 = A lot 5 = Whatever it takes	Mother	Father	**14.** Becoming more aware of how racism or discrimination affects people from different cultures.
			15. Learning about how parenting practices of a foster child's culture differ from my own.
			16. Appreciating the music of a foster child's culture.
			17. Considering how my stereotypes about cultures affect a foster child.
			18. Learning how children benefit from interacting with other children from different cultures.
			19. Learning how I can help a foster child maintain his/her culture.
			20. Learning about how a foster child may have different views about the community than I do.
			21. Finding ways a foster child can fit into my family without changing things about his/her culture.
			22. Examining how my beliefs and values affect aspects of a foster child's culture.
			23. Learning how to teach a foster child about racism and discrimination.
			24. Learning about the language expressions of a foster child's culture.
			25. Taking a foster child to cultural places and events.

Mother	Father	
		CRFS score