What is important to looked-after young people during adolescence? A qualitatively driven photo-elicitation study.

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ABSTRACT

A prominent feature of being a looked-after young person is that your life is overseen by a range of professionals, who make decisions that affect you (Golding et al., 2006). Whilst adults may assume these are in the best interest of the young person, there is a continuing lack of research into the experiences of looked-after young people to inform these decisions from the perspective of the young people. A need for research which allows looked-after young people to contribute to the literature what is important to them during adolescence was established. This exploratory study used a participant-led, photo-elicitation methodology to explore 'what is important to looked-after young people during adolescence?'. The present study aimed to allow participants to meaningfully share what was important to them and contribute their perspective to the extant literature on looked-after young people. The study consisted of three phases: consultation, main study, and feedback. As a methodologically-led study, the research also aimed to evaluate the utility of the methodology with the participant group, whilst also considering what occurs when the findings of research are fed back to participants.

Six young people who lived in foster care were recruited. A photo-elicitation interview was conducted in which participants brought photographs of what was important to them to the interview which they then discussed. Data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, alongside the use of photographs to inform and illuminate the analysis. A core theme and five main themes were generated to reflect what was important to participants. Participants described their experiences as being embedded in the place they lived, with their development being shaped by the possibilities this provided. Participants described what was important to them as: being seen and heard; a part of their place and being with others; finding space to escape to; relationships with their pets; and getting to know yourself. The research then returned to participants to explore their experience of the research process and to inform the literature about what happens when a researcher returns to participants to present their analysis. The present study concluded that looked-after young people have an opinion about what is important to them and when given the opportunity to participate were able to share this. Feedback appeared important to participants as it allowed them to see how their contributions were used, to feel heard and understood, and to reflect upon their experiences in relation to other looked-after young people.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The present thesis reports a study exploring what is important to looked-after young people during adolescence. The term 'looked-after children' is used to describe children who are legally under the care of the state, under the Children's Act (1989); within this thesis they will be referred to as looked-after young people.

A participant-led methodology will be described which facilitated six 13-15 year-olds to discuss what was important to them during that time, within the context of being looked-after. In addition to the main study, the present thesis consisted of consultation and feedback phases. The consultation phase was completed to incorporate the views of looked-after young people into the study design and the materials used in the main study. During the feedback phase, participants were revisited to provide feedback on the findings and to give them the opportunity to share their experience of participating in the research.

The thesis takes the position that adolescence is a period of unique social, psychological, and biological transition, with a young person's external context and internal experiences leading to possible tensions requiring resolution (Coleman, 1974). It is the stance of this thesis that individuals require agency and power to change aspects of their lives if events and transitions are to lead to positive growth (e.g., Bosma & Kunnen, 2001). The present study aimed to contribute to the extant literature through encouraging looked-after young people to talk about what was important to them during the adolescent phase, within the context of being looked-after. An interpretative phenomenological analysis was conducted on the research data to interpret the perspectives of participants. Through considering what was important to looked-after young people, the present study intended to provide an aperture through which an understanding of how participants are navigating adolescent development in this context can be gained. A stance on childhood and participation will be introduced during the thesis in which paying attention to the views of the young people themselves, as experts in their own lives, was seen as a crucial and complementary addition to a somewhat adult-led, dominant narrative currently available in the literature.

Photo-elicitation will be introduced as a creative methodology which had the potential to allow a young person to guide and control what was brought to and discussed within the research interview. This methodology will be proposed as well-suited to this research due to its strengths in finding a meaningful way to ask young people about their lives, and in supporting young people to 'open up' and discuss their experiences during the research process (Smith, Gidlow, & Steel, 2012). The present study therefore, in addition to exploring the research question, reflected upon the methodology employed with the aim of informing future research about the potential benefits and challenges of such an approach.

The thesis begins with a study justification and literature review. The literature will outline perspectives on childhood and participation, looked-after young people, and adolescence with a focus on self and self-development. The literature review will intentionally not outline all possibly relevant literature for consideration at this point. The interpretations generated will instead be used to guide the discussion chapter toward the theories and literature which are relevant to understanding the experiences of participants, and what is important to them.

CHAPTER TWO: STUDY JUSTIFICATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will begin by outlining some key experiences of the looked-after population, such as the potential effects and impact of abuse and maltreatment on future outcomes. It will then discuss the theoretical stance on childhood which the present study took and the literature on participation that underpinned the methodology. Adolescence will be discussed, and normative theories will be outlined which suggest that development of identity may be a key task of this stage. In contrast to this, theories and research which propose the context in which individuals develop has an impact on their development will be explored. This will be used to justify the position that there was a need to understand what is important to looked-after young people during adolescence and about their experiences of developing within the context of being looked-after.

2.1 Looked-after Young People

2.1.1 Looked-after Young People: Statistics

In 2015, there were 69,540 young people who were classed as looked-after in England (Department for Education, 2015a), with 13% of looked-after young people remaining in care for five years or more (House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2009). The number of looked-after young people in England has been steadily increasing, with a 6% increase in the number of looked-after young people between 2011 and 2015 (Department for Education, 2015a). Sixty percent of looked-after young people are cared for under a care order (full or interim), meaning that the full responsibility for their care is held by the Local Authority. When children are unable to be adequately cared for at home and responsibility for their care is taken on by the state, they are most likely to be placed in a foster placement. Seventy-five percent of looked-after young people were placed in this environment in 2015 (Department for Education, 2015a), which is an increase of 9% since 2010 (Zayed & Harker, 2015). Of children who are looked-after, the largest group are aged 10-15, with the second largest being 16 and over (Department for Education, 2015a; 2015b). Data suggest that approximately 60% of the looked-after population are in adolescence (Department for Education, 2015b).

Of those that were cared for in 2014, 61% were so due to abuse or neglect (Department of Education, 2015a), suggesting a history of trauma and adversity is common, but not a certainty, in the looked-after population. Other reasons for being looked-after in 2014 included: child disability, parental illness or disability, family dysfunction or in acute distress and the young person displaying socially unacceptable behaviour (Department of Education, 2015b). The potential negative impact of abuse and neglect on the development of children is well documented, and include effects on emotional, social, and language development (Fisher, 2015;

Meltzer, Corbin, Gatward, Goodman, & Ford, 2003), as well as physical and neurobiological development (Gerhardt, 2014). The looked-after population is recognised as having complex needs, which may be ongoing throughout their time in care and beyond (Stott, Nissim, Dent, & Golding, 2006).

2.1.2 Outcomes for looked-after young people

Within England, there is an estimated prevalence rate of 45% for mental health difficulties in the looked-after population (Ford, Vostanis, Meltzer, & Goodman, 2007; Meltzer et al., 2003). Both externalising and internalising disorders are more commonly experienced by looked-after young people than in the general population, with conduct disorders, depression and anxiety disorders being the most predominant diagnoses. The prevalence of abuse and neglect in the life narratives of looked-after young people has been used to provide some understanding of the psychological distress in this population. Roy, Rutter, & Pickles (2000), however, suggest it is more complex than this, with research evidencing the prevalence of negative outcomes as a result of abuse and neglect, genetics, the experience of being removed from home and then living within care, and also due to a combination of these influences and experiences. Being looked-after, for example, is also commonly associated with there being an experience of instability of care; the average number of placement moves for looked-after young people in England was five in 2011 (Department for Education, 2012). These placement moves for some young people can occur close together, for instance, the longitudinal study by Ward and Skuse (2001) found that 28 percent of participants had three or more moves within their first year of being in care.

Rees (2013) compared the outcomes for looked-after young people in England with general population norms and found the looked-after sample to score less well on the domains of mental health, emotional literacy, cognitive ability, and literacy attainment. There were, however, positive exceptions that are often not noted in the literature; for example, 38-45% of participants scored within the normal range on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, a measure of psychopathology. This finding has been replicated in the national statistics for England on outcomes for looked-after young people with 50% scoring within the normal range in 2013, 2014, and 2015 (Department for Education, 2015b). This led Rees to conclude that whilst not equivalent with the general population, performance within the average or above average range on the domains measured was achievable for a large proportion of looked-after young people.

Looked-after young people are therefore highlighted in the literature as a population who are at a greater risk of emotional distress and other negative outcomes, such as mental health difficulties, due to their background and current context in which they reside. Being looked-after in itself may not, however, necessitate poorer outcomes (e.g. Rees, 2013); it may

be important to understand the experiences of being looked-after as it may increase the understanding around what moderates these differences in outcomes for looked-after young people.

The evidence base suggests that as the number of placement transitions increases, so too does the occurrence of negative outcomes for young people (Fisher, 2015; Newton, Litrownik & Landsverk, 2000). It has, however, been suggested that planned moves in which the young person's views are sought and responded to may moderate negative outcomes, and are favourable to abrupt transitions (Fahlberg, 2012). This provides an example of how incorporating the views of looked-after young people can improve the outcomes for a process which, whilst undertaken for good reason, can lead to poorer outcomes for looked-after young people. In addition, it suggests that it is important to explore the perspective of looked-after young people on their experiences, such as moving placements, in more depth to generate a greater understanding of what can make a difference during these difficult transitions. A proactive approach which supports looked-after young people to speak about what is important to them and enables them to have some control of the transition may be required (Fahlberg, 2012). This may be particularly important for the young people whom exhibit internalising behaviours, such as anxiety or depression, as they can become more withdrawn and isolated, and therefore their needs can be overlooked compared to their peers with more disruptive externalising behaviour (Newton, et al., 2000).

2.2 Participation and Childhood

The chapter will now consider ideas around childhood and participation to provide further context to the research and to outline a need for research with looked-after young people, whilst making transparent the position of the present study in relation to these areas. The participation in research of looked-after young people will be outlined as an alternative to a protectionist, adult-dominant approach.

2.2.1 Childhood

'Childhood' is a socially-constructed concept used to describe a period of life and development which acts to distinguish the child from the adult, and thus creates a notion of separateness between the world of the child from that of the adult (Archard, 2004). Childhood and children have been an area of ongoing interest in both society and the literature (Prout & James, 2015). Whilst the construction of childhood has changed over time, a commonality exists in that these understandings have largely been constructed by adults, with the experience of the child being muted (Hendrick, 2015; James & Prout, 2015). A dominant position in research, policy, and practice frames childhood as a period of dependency focusing on the 'needs of children' (Woodhead, 2015). This position leads to a protectionist view of childhood

in which adults are providers whose role are to protect and meet the needs of the passive and vulnerable child (Woodhead, 2015). This protectionist stance positions the child as helpless and has been suggested to lead to restricted participation of young people in both research and the decisions that affect them in an attempt to protect them from harm and unnecessary burden (Pinkney, 2011). Pinkney suggests that protectionism is particularly visible within the context of care, and the dominance of this practice has been largely unquestioned.

Within the literature on childhood, however, there is an emerging suggestion that, like adults, young people should be seen as having lives and relationships which they are active in constructing (Archard, 2004; James & Prout, 2015). This contrasts a literature which had been critiqued as being "adultist" (Luttrell, 2010, p. 224) in its prioritisation of the views and opinions of adults in relation to matters relevant to young people. Research has been challenged to progress from viewing childhood as passive and therefore exploring it as it is constructed by adults (James & Prout, 2015) to instead finding ways to work with young people, through the exploration of participant-led practices and the use of methodologies which allow the perspectives of young people to be represented (James & Prout, 2015; Luttrell, 2010).

Whilst the proposition that research should be focused on the perspectives of young people is established, and somewhat uncontentious, the extent to which this has been occurring in relation to looked-after young people is less, however, than other groups of young people. A reason that research with looked-after young people may be limited is due to complexities in balancing the rights of the young person to have their opinion sought and heard against their need for protection from harm (Schofield, 2005). The research process, however, is not without compromise, with the young person either being heard and harmed or protected and unharmed, and so this awareness of possible harm should not prevent looked-after young people being heard. Golding et al. (2006) instead suggest there is a need for researchers to hear what is said by the young person, whilst continuing to hold the responsibility of being an adult who needs to consider the young person's best interests. This may be achieved by continuing to be committed to ethical practices throughout the research process, for instance to avoid harm through disempowerment in the research process (Del Busso, 2004).

Research into the views of looked-after young people may sometimes find itself at an impasse due to the perceived difficulties in researching this group. Looked-after young people have been described in the literature as a hard-to-reach (Pomerantz, Hughes, & Thompson, 2007), socially excluded group (Axford, 2008; Department of Health, 2004). There is, however, complexity defining these terms, as the factors that make looked-after young people 'hard to reach' and 'socially excluded' are related to aspects of an individual's life and circumstances, such as displaying offending behaviour, rather than their status of being looked-after (Axford, 2008; Hughes, 2007). An alternative view is that professionals and researchers in the lives of looked-after young people are 'hard to reach' for the young people (Hughes, 2007). This is

supported by the narratives of young people which suggest that it is hard for looked-after young people to make their views known and for these to be heard, for instance due to professionals being rigid in using an approach designed by and for adult professionals, or focusing on assessment rather than action (Axford, 2008; Hughes, 2007). The use of language such as 'hard to reach' positions looked-after young people as difficult to engage with (Hughes, 2007). There is, however, evidence of good research and participation in clinical practice in which, with support, the views of looked-after young people have been successfully sought and heard (Davies & Wright, 2008).

Whilst uncommon and limited, there are examples in the literature of good participation practices with looked-after children. For example, Madigan, Quayle, Cossar and Paton (2013) consulted a care leaver about their research design and returned to both the participants and the care leaver to discuss the research findings. This research provides evidence that looked-after young people, when given the opportunity, can be engaged with and provide meaningful insights into their experiences and lives, which can lead to recommendations about clinical and systemic issues. Recommendations included the opportunity to meet care leavers and others in care so that they can explore their identity around being in foster care and what this means to them. It was also recommended that professionals who supported looked-after young people consider the significance of feeling different, in order to better support these young people with coping with this perception of themselves. The outcomes of the consultation and this feedback process are not discussed, so it is unclear if they impacted on service delivery and if there were any outcomes of participating for the young people involved.

A lack of participatory research continues to prioritise the adult construction of childhood and, arguably, to silence the looked-after young person, viewing them as passive in their lives and in need of protection (Woodhead, 2015). This thesis responded to the challenge of conducting research with young people, believing that the lives of looked-after young people are worthy of research and an area of importance. Attention is given to methodology and the ways of gaining insight and understanding from young people. By challenging the protectionist agenda and the view of young people as passive in their lives, the present study aimed to contribute to the extant research available into the experiences of looked-after young people from their perspective. The findings of the research will be brought together with the extant literature, which emerged as relevant, within the discussion chapter.

2.2.2 Participation as a right of looked-after young people

Participation is a process of a person meaningfully contributing to the decisions which affect their life, their context, and the wider community in which they reside (Hart, 1992). For young people, this involves being supported and facilitated so that they have the motivation and competence necessary to participant in the participation process (Hart, 1992).

Superseding a theoretically-driven argument that looked-after young people possess a world view which is worthy of exploration, the need to seek the views of and listen to looked-after young people within England is embedded within the law. Section 22 of the Children's Act (1989) outlines the need to ensure looked-after young people have their opinions, wishes and feelings sought and included within the processes and decisions that impact on them. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) in article 12 formalises the rights of young people to share their views and be listened to on the matters which affect them. This began to move from a construction of childhood based upon 'needs' toward an alternative concept of childhood based upon 'rights'. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2013) guidelines, in addition, discussed a lack of participation in important decisions which affect the lives of young people as possibly indicating a safeguarding concern. This rights-based discourse positions young people as not only active in their lives but as having views and experiences of the world to which we should be attentive. This potentially places young people in an empowered position in which they define their own 'needs' and desires and it is important that research reflects this perspective.

2.2.3 The importance of participation for looked-after young people

There are multiple factors that contribute to outcomes for looked-after young people (e.g. Roy, et al., 2000), with participation in the decisions and processes that affect a young person possibly moderating these outcomes. Fahlberg (2012) suggests that through the views of young people being included in placement transitions, and the transition being planned to incorporate these, the negative impact of the move can be reduced. Clark and Statham (2005) argue, particularly due to the disruptions within their lives, it is important that looked-after young people perceive that they have an opinion and a view that is listened to, as this leads to feelings of being understood and being important. Frank (2006) suggests the benefits of participating for young people are generally amplified compared to adults due to participation occurring during psychosocial development; and due to young people commonly having limited experience of previous participation. Based upon this hypothesis, amplification may be even greater for looked-after young people due to their experiences and developing within an adult-saturated developmental context.

The process of listening to young people, and taking their opinions into consideration has been suggested as having the potential to lead to interventions being more successful, increased confidence and assertiveness in the participants, and as supporting the development of a more positive sense of self (Eide & Winger, 2005; NICE, 2013; Triseliotis, Borland, Hill, & Lambert, 1995). Morsillo and Prilleltensky (2007), when evaluating two social action projects in which young people participated in the organisation of activities and initiatives in their communities, found participants described developing their sense of control and feelings of

responsibility, assertiveness, self-expression, and a sense of being liberated, as well as developing participatory skills related to the project. Sabo (2001) in his evaluation of four participatory projects described the positive impact of participation on individuals, such as increased self-efficacy and confidence. Sabo goes on to suggest that in addition to these individual gains, participation was described by the young people to have positively impacted on how they relate to their peers and adults in their life, which was attributed by Sabo to the relational component of participation. Research has indicated the potential positive impact of participation for young people; however, based on their review of the literature, Cavet and Sloper (2004) conclude that there is a need for further research into the impact of participation.

Whilst seeking the views of looked-after young people would be predicted to positively affect the outcomes for this group through developing more attuned services to meet the young peoples' needs, there is limited participatory research on the experiences of looked-after young people and much of the work has still maintained an adult agenda (Hill, Davis, Prout, and Tisdall, 2004). Consequently, research seeking the views of looked-after young people has focused on their participation in service design, delivery, and outcomes (Clark & Statham, 2005). Evidence has established, however, that topics which are important to adults, and assumed to be important to young people, may not be important to young people (Yardley, 2014). The problem often lies on the nexus between consultation and true participant-led research. For example, Spicer and Evans (2006) distinguish true participation from consultation, in which individuals who are consulted do not define what is important but are instead agreeing to the adult's previously formed agenda. This has led to some suggesting that participation, if poorly defined and operated, can become tokenistic and lose its value (Kirby & Bryson, 2002).

Hart (1997), based upon the types of participation observed as occurring in research projects and professional practice, described a ladder of participation which suggests that participatory practices with young people can vary across eight levels of participation, ranging from no participation to genuine participation in which ideas, decisions, and knowledge are initiated by young people and then shared with adults. The first few stages of the ladder metaphor were used to explain practices which were not participation but mistakenly may be perceived as this (Hart, 2013). Tokenistic participatory practice, for example, may include young people being asked to participate in a project with no adaptation in approach by the researcher, and no preparation of the participant in advance to truly allow the young person to participate (Hart, 1992). It is suggested that whilst participation has come with promise of positives such as empowerment and agency, there is a need to be critical of participatory practices and their ability to deliver on these ideals. Some participatory research and practice has been uncritical in its approach, which led to Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) calling for recognition that using participatory techniques does not immediately eradicate problematic issues that are present in other research methodologies, such as power imbalances. Instead they

suggest that, like any methodology, participant-led practices require a critical and reflexive approach, rather than assuming these projects are automatically participatory in approach. It appears that simply the presence of a young person does not indicate that they are participating in the process or decision and benefiting from the experience. Without the necessary support and adaptation it is possible that the young peoples' opinions and experiences may remain not known or misunderstood.

Golding et al. (2006) suggest that, based on their experiences, research with looked-after young people may require more careful thought and planning than with other populations in order to support the young people to access and engage with research successfully. It is suggested, for instance that, due to life experiences, consideration needs to be given to the research relationship and their ability to trust the adult researcher (Golding, et al., 2006). In line with this, Hill, et al. (2004) suggest that social inclusion is essentially underpinned by participation and developing an approach to participation which is based upon a knowledge of the needs of the young people of interest.

Through talking to looked-after young people, McLeod (2007) established a difference between an adult's and a young person's view of listening, with this highlighting an additional consideration when researching young people. Adults saw listening as a process in which young people are given the opportunity to express their views. However, the participants were less focused on this process and more on the outcome of participating in decisions. If the discussion points remained unchanged or were not addressed, then the young people viewed themselves as being unheard. Thus, listening was confirmed only when something changed. A way to ensure that young people feel listened to is to feedback the results of the research and any suggestions emerging from the data which they generated (Fleming, 2013). It seems participation for young people need not be a one-off event, but a cycle in which feeding back is as important as the initial listening due to seeing what they said being put into action. Following listening to looked-after young people, solutions may not always be possible; however, Golding et al. (2006) emphasise the importance of feeding this back and discussing this with young people so they understand this and may still feel heard.

There is theoretical and legislative support to the suggestion that research involving looked-after young people should focus upon providing them opportunity to share what is important to them. Adolescence will now be suggested as a developmental period where research of this kind is particularly required. Normative theories of adolescence will be outlined which suggest universal features of this stage. In contrast, theories and research which suggests that the context in which individuals develop impacts on their development will then be explored. A need for research, based upon this critique, will then be outlined through applying the literature discussed to looked-after young people to justify the need for the present study.

2.3 Adolescence

Adolescence is considered by many to be a universal phase of development characterised as a transition period (Coleman, 2011; Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). During adolescence a young person develops physically, cognitively, behaviourally, emotionally, and socially (Hagell, Coleman, & Brooks, 2013). Adolescence has been suggested as a time when young people further develop in their thinking and reasoning, such as the ability to balance risk, reflect and learn from experience, problem solve, and to control impulses (Coleman, 2011). The changes are partially biologically-driven and connected with the onset and processes of puberty; however, development occurs within a context which should not be overlooked or undervalued (Coleman, 2011).

The young person goes through "explosive changes" cognitively (p. 83, Giedd, 2004) as the brain reorganises and develops to become better attuned to their environment. Based on the 'use it or lose it' hypothesis, neuronal pathways which are not environmentally stimulated, rendering them unused, shrink and die during adolescence (Giedd, 2004). The World Health Organisation (2014) defines adolescence as occurring between ages 10 and 19, although research into the impact of context and societal changes, alongside neurobiological research, suggests that adolescence may continue beyond this age in Western society (Coleman, 2011). The development of the brain creates the potential for changes in the way young people understand the world and themselves, which the chapter will now consider.

2.3.1 The Self, Self-Concepts, and Identity defined

Identity and the self are constructs which are widely present in the psychological literature on adolescence; however, their definitions vary across bodies of work. To ensure clarity and precision in discussion of these constructs, operationalisation of these terms for this research is necessary prior to discussion of these areas in adolescent development. Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith (2012) define each of these as similar but discrete constructs, whilst acknowledging they have also been used interchangeably, as though synonymous, to refer to the same concept.

Oyserman et al. (2012) define the self as an individual's global sense of 'me', which is both the 'me' who is the person who is thinking, and the 'me' who is an object that can be thought about by others. It is acknowledged that this individualistic definition of self is particularly based on Western values, and is the self which is widely discussed in psychological literature. Within Western culture the idea of a singular core self is emphasised and culturally valued (English & Chen, 2011).

Oyserman et al. (2012) and Coleman (2011) propose the idea of self-concepts, which may be a useful alternative construct to understand this experience of different selves. Self-concepts are defined as representing areas of the self, which together form the whole self.

Varied self-concepts are theorised to be available to individuals, such as the concept of self in an academic setting in comparison to the concept of self when with friends, with specific self-concepts becoming more available to an individual as a function of the situation they are within (Coleman, 2011).

The identity construct has been used and defined both in a way which is tantamount to the construct of a self-concept, and also as a way of understanding an element of the self-concept (Oyserman, et al., 2012). Erikson defined identity as what a person means to themselves and what they mean to others (Erikson, 1977). Identity is defined as a person's sense of who they are; the 'I'. Erikson viewed identity as both conscious and unconscious, and as a base on which a person can predict the future (Kroger, 2004). This idea of identity in some ways incorporates the variations of the self across contexts, whilst also constructing an idea of singularity by suggesting an idea of the core 'I' which has been maintained across time and into the future. This definition has clear parallels with that of the self and self-concepts, and so could be described as such. Identity will therefore only be used specifically to describe the construct as defined by Erikson, with reference to self elsewhere. This understanding of the self is central to many of the dominant theories of adolescence, which will now be outlined.

2.3.2 Psychological Theories of Adolescence

Theories of normative adolescent development suggest human development is universal and adolescence progresses in a specified way. Normative theories of identity formation suggest that post-adolescence is defined by stability in the self and identity (Kroger, 2004); for instance, Erikson (1968) describes that following a period of exploration and experimentation, at this point that the self is stable and consolidated and the 'I' defined as distinct from others.

Whilst these theories suggest a precisely bound process of identity formation which is complete post-adolescence, the idea of a stable identity is challenged by many. Meeus (2011) concludes that whilst longitudinal research is supportive of progression in identity formation during adolescence, it appears based on research on adults that this continues beyond these years and is a life-long process. Based on their review of relevant longitudinal studies from 2000 to 2010 Meeus also describes, that whilst progression in identity is present for most, for some identity does not change through the adolescent period, suggesting that the assumption of identity formation as universal may be inaccurate. Normative theories have fallen out of favour in the literature and have been critiqued as inflexible and as inadequately accounting for the effects of context on development (Smith, Cowie, & Blades, 2003); however, interest in Erikson's (1968) stage theory and the adolescent stage is sustained. Looked-after young people develop in a context which differs from that of the general population, and so theories of adolescence which are flexible and incorporate the impact of context may be well suited to this group.

Developmental contextualism (Lerner & Kaufmann, 1985; Lerner, 1991) describes the position that development is relational in nature and occurs within an interaction between individuals and their context. This framework emphasises the importance of the interaction between the young person and the social world at both a familial and societal level. The relationship with an individual's context is seen as complex, as an individual and their context interact and modify each other (Lerner & Kaufmann, 1985). For instance, changes in the adolescent, such as an increased desire to spend time with peers, can lead to changes in parenting, such as reduced supervision and boundaries, which in turn impacts on further development, such as learning through risk-taking (Coleman, 2011). A key tenant of developmental contextualism is that a young person plays an active role in their development, impacting their environment and shaping their own development. Developmental contextualism draws attention to the concept of goodness-of-fit, suggesting development is influenced by how well the needs of the young person match their environment, rather than just due to the individual or contextual factors alone. This assertion is supported by authors who have discussed ideas such as 'turning points' and the importance of timing in adolescence, and the existence of periods in which change is more likely and long lasting (e.g. Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). On the basis of developmental contextualism, in order to develop understanding of adolescence, research needs to be sensitive to the diverse and variable conditions under which development occurs, considering questions which integrate multiple levels, such as the importance of both biological and environmental influences (Gottlieb, 1991; Lerner, 1991).

The Focal Model of Adolescent Development (Coleman, 1974) also argues that theories of adolescence need to accommodate the effects of individual differences in young people and their lives. The model suggests that adolescent development is a single stage which is characterised by a range of issues and tasks, predominantly around relationships (Coleman, 1974). The model is based on a cross-sectional research study which used projective techniques and examined developmental tasks of UK adolescents, sampled across social classes and school settings, at ages 11, 13, 15, and 17 (ibid). It was demonstrated that issues that were pertinent to adolescents varied as a function of age, with certain tasks being more prominent at different points. It was theorised that adolescents navigate these multiple issues through individually focusing on each task, rather than attempting to confront them simultaneously. This is how the young person is hypothesised to resolve the various issues of adolescence, in a singular nature as different issues come into focus (Coleman, 1974). It is theorised that when individuals have to cope with more than this single issue at a time that problems can emerge. Whilst Coleman described the peak ages that certain tasks are prominent within adolescent development, the Focal Model is not a stage model. Prominent tasks do not progress in a fixed sequence; it is not essential that each issue is resolved to allow progression to focus on another developmental task; and none of the developmental patterns were evidenced as specific to a single age.

Research has supported the application of the focal model cross-nationally (e.g. Goossens & Marcoen, 1999) and in line with the model has found that increases in the number of tasks that have to be undertaken by adolescents in a short period was associated with negative consequences, such as reduced self-esteem, psychological distress and emotional dysregulation, and family-related loneliness (Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987; Evans, 2003; Lasgaard, Armour, Bramsen, & Goossens, 2016).

2.3.3 Adolescence: Biological Underpinnings of the Development of Self

The psychological theories of adolescence are linked with the development and increased capacity of the brain during adolescence. Coleman (2011) proposes that increased cognitive ability in adolescence, which allows introspection and more complex self-contemplation, interacts with the visibility of physical change in puberty, to prompt development of self. At a younger age when these changes begin a young person's self-esteem and identity is based largely on how they look (Coleman, 2011). With increased cognitive ability young people begin to also be able to hold in mind how others view them, and to reflect on how they are viewed from different perspectives. During adolescence young people have been shown to explore and experiment with the self, and there are examples of the self becoming more complex, with young people describing different selves based on the context they are within (Coleman, 2011).

2.3.4 Adolescence in Looked-after Young People: Application of Theory and Research

Developmental contextualism (Lerner & Kaufmann, 1985) proposes successful development occurs within a young person's context, with this context shaping their development. The young person is viewed as an active in their development, with individuals and contexts having a dynamic interaction. Looked-after young people are part of a system which may be less able to be flexible to idiosyncratic developmental needs. For some looked-after young people, adolescence may be more difficult if contextual factors prevent timely responses which match the developmental need of young people. When considering everyday activities that looked-after young people may wish to undertake, such as sleeping at a friend's house, for example, this is more complex than for other young people their age as they may have to get permission from their social worker (Department for Education, 2011).

The Focal Model (Coleman, 1974) suggests young people benefit from having the agency to undertake tasks in a singular nature. Bosma and Kunnen (2001) completed a literature review in relation to identity development. It was concluded, based on the literature, that whilst conflict may trigger some development, that it is the action which follows challenges in adolescence which are vital if challenges are to lead to positive growth. Bosma and Kunnen discuss possible determinants of change as: openness to experience and change, positive

previous experiences of coping with conflict and change, and access to role models, support, and a stimulating environment which gives opportunity for conflict within supported development. Young people therefore require some agency and power over the events in their lives to allow positive growth during adolescence. In their exploration of the impact of life stressors on adult identity development, Anthis (2002) concluded exploration of the self does not occur if life stressors put constraints on an individual which does not allow enough capacity to explore their experience of themselves. However, looked-after young people tend not to be consulted on decisions which affect them (Clark & Statham, 2005), and so their ability to adapt and control their environment is reduced.

Based on theories which indicate the importance of context in adolescent development (e.g. Coleman, 1974) it is predicted that the adolescent development of looked-after young people is impacted by the system and the events and contexts of their lives that have made their development non-normative. The development of self, for instance, occurs in relation to others, and therefore is impacted by the early experiences and relationships that proceeded adolescence (Golding et al., 2006). Looked-after young people will have experienced the loss of these relationships and when they had these relationships the quality of them may not have been 'good enough' (Jack, 2008). Whilst normative stage theories may not adequately explain development for this group, there is little research that has attempted to explore adolescent development in this population. Less is known about this population's experience of adolescence compared to young people living within a family context upon which normative stage theories of adolescent development were largely based upon (Kools, 1997).

Munro (2001) provides an example of the impact of the context in which looked-after young people develop on their adolescent development. Munro interviewed English looked-after young people aged 10-17 years about their perceptions of their opportunity to contribute and be involved in making decisions which affect them. Participants described having limited or no influence or power in decisions which impact on their lives. This is discussed in relation to the pursuit of autonomy within adolescence, and their developing ability to meet their own needs. For looked-after young people it appeared that there may have been a difficult balance between their developmental need to gain a sense of autonomy, with the needs of the foster carers and social workers to maintain minimal risk and to safeguard. Munro summarises this as 'professional surveillance', with an adolescent's sense of privacy being less achievable as their life is recorded within case notes. Based on the assumption that adolescents shape their own experience of adolescence (Coleman, 2011), research is needed with looked-after young people to understand how they develop through adolescence and negotiate developmental tasks (e.g. Coleman, 1974), such as the pursuit of autonomy (Munro, 2001). When considering Munro's study, empowerment through participation may not just be a service and legal requirement and important for the research community, but may underpin a developmental task. There is a

limited amount of research which has explored the experiences of young people in foster care in relation to the self, with much of the research that has been conducted in this area offering limited commentary on the impact of specific contexts on development. For instance, McMurray, Connolly, Preston-Shoot, & Wigley (2011) interviewed 13 young people aged 12 to 16 years for whom a UK local authority held responsibility, and their social workers, about identity. Using semi-structured interviewing, it was found that identity development was an area of importance for the participants. A theme of the interviews was the participant's want for a greater sense of control over their lives, with McMurray et al. describing that external processes which led to uncertainty, such as future stability of a placement, limited this and appeared to put the participants' identity development on 'standby'. The context the participants were recruited from was diverse, with one living in foster care, whilst six lived in residential care and six with a birth parent. As the themes of the research were not differentiated by residential setting, it is not possible to establish if themes varied across contexts, and so it is difficult to reach precise conclusions about the potential impact of each of these distinct contexts on adolescent development.

Madigan et al. (2013) explored feelings of difference in nine looked-after young people aged 12-16 from Scotland, and the impact of the context of being in foster care. The study, using IPA, found one super-ordinate theme, 'difference', which was split into four sub-ordinate themes: 'if they know I'm in care what the hell will they say to me'; 'they alienate you'; 'expected to deal with it that you're different'; and 'noticing differences'. This study provides evidence that young people are aware of the differences between the context they live within and that of others, and are attuned to the impact this has had on the way others view them. One way young people respond to this difference is by concealing that they are looked-after as this reduces others' perceptions that they are different; as one young person put it, "if people think you're different, you're different" (Madigan et al. 2013, p 399). From considering the research question, it is apparent Madigan et al. were particularly interested in perceptions of difference in their participants and, perhaps unsurprisingly, described a super-ordinate theme within their interviews of difference. It is possible that the questioning involved in the interview was focused on the area of difference, and therefore prioritised this as an area of importance to their participants.

Looked-after young people develop within a society that views their circumstance as abnormal. Society favours those who live at home with two parents, and therefore those who are looked-after live within an unusual context and thus have a worse childhood (Mills & Frost, 2007). Such negative stereotypes and marginalisation were found to impact on identity development in American adolescents who lived in residential children's homes, impacting on the adolescent's view of the self as held by others (Kools, 1997); for example, describing themselves as being considered 'bad', 'abnormal', or 'damaged' by others due to living in foster

care (Kools, 1997). Mills and Frost argue one way of responding to the negative stigmatisation of looked-after young people as a group is to encourage a view of looked-after young people as individuals in their own right. Through placing them at the centre of the process, young people are supported to navigate their social context (Mills & Frost, 2007). As previously discussed, through experiencing participatory opportunities, looked-after young people may also develop in areas such as assertiveness, self-esteem and confidence, which may equip them to manage the negative perceptions of their social context (Clark & Statham, 2005).

2.4 Summary and Justification of the Thesis

Adolescence is a period of unique social, psychological, and biological transition, with internal and external factors leading to possible tensions requiring resolution (Coleman, 1974). This research considers adolescence as a single transitional phase, during which young people develop along trajectories which are individual to them.

Looked-after young people develop through a sequence of normative and non-normative events and environments during their childhood and adolescence. A prominent feature of being a looked-after young person is that one's life is overseen by a range of professionals, who make decisions that affect you (Golding et al., 2006). Whilst adults may assume these are in the best interest of the child, there is a continuing lack of research into the experiences of looked-after young people to inform these decisions from the perspective of the young people. There is an established need for research which allows this population to contribute their perspectives to the literature.

Through researching adolescence as a developmental transition within the context of being looked-after, it was hoped it will be discovered what is important to individuals from this population. Theories such as Focal Theory (Coleman, 1974) and Developmental Contextualism (Lerner & Kaufmann, 1985), which emphasise a relational aspect between person and environment, are supportive of the need for a better understanding of the experience of adolescence in the context of being looked-after. Once difference is accepted as part of childhood, the experiences of young people may be better heard, and thus change and difference may be reciprocated by services which support the young people (Stott et al., 2006). This research aimed to contribute to the extant literature through encouraging looked-after young people to share what was important to them, to offer an insight about what is significant to them about being looked-after and how they are experiencing and navigating adolescent development in this context. Based on the literature it was assumed that this would involve considering how this related to their development of a sense of themselves through adolescence. By using a participant-led methodology, however, it was anticipated that other developmental processes and experiences which were important to participants would become visible.

This research aimed to explore as open a question as possible to limit the setting of topics considered a priori to be important. Thus, a technique was used which allows the young person to guide the interview and to control what was brought to and discussed within it. With participation at the core of this present study, the aim was that the findings would represent what was important to the participants involved. It was hoped this would provide insights that can inform service delivery beyond the areas that adults have previously perceived as important to looked-after young people. Over-and-above this, however, the aim was to empower participants through connecting with their experiences in a meaningful way, and then returning to discuss the personal and service level impact of their participation with them. The present study then interpreted these perspectives in order to assimilate the findings within current literature and theory; the addition of local knowledge to the extant literature hoped to provide a richer account of adolescent development in a looked-after context.

Within the next two chapters, a participant-led, creative method will be described which is anticipated to allow the research to better gather and represent the experiences of the participants of this research. Initially, however, the methodological underpinnings of this method will be explored.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research largely shares a commonality of being person-centred, exploratory and interested in the meanings within participants' accounts of a phenomenon (Madill & Gough, 2008; Holloway & Todres, 2003). Whilst these similarities allow the grouping together of approaches that are classed as qualitative methodologies, Holloway and Todres outlined the need for research to be clear in the underpinnings of the qualitative approach being used, as this dictates the question asked, the language used to describe the research, the ways in which the data is gathered, and how the data is analysed and presented. This section will therefore detail the areas which underpinned the present study and its design, focusing on ethics and participation, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and its theoretical stance, photo-elicitation as a visual methodology, and reflexivity.

3.1 Ethics and Participation

When considering the involvement of young people in research and their ability to participate and be heard and feel their opinions are of value, Kirk (2007) highlighted the importance of acknowledging the distinction between young people and adults. Whilst many of the ethical considerations which are important for research with adults also apply in research with young people, for example consent and confidentiality, there were additional considerations that needed to be made. It was important that the present study was designed and conducted in a way which is appropriate for the participants in the study and their context, experiences, and abilities, as well as the research question (Kirk, 2007). The position the present took ethically will now be outlined.

3.1.1 Power and Marginalisation

There is an inherent power imbalance within the adult-child relationship in research with young people, which if not acknowledged may lead to an ongoing power and status imbalance, which represents a large ethical challenge (Morrow & Richards, 1996). Whilst the present study viewed the young person as competent and able to talk about their life, thought was required so not to replicate the unequal power relationship between adults and young people that exists in society, particularly with groups such as looked-after young people (Kirk, 2007). The research aimed to be collaborative, which involved being aware that young people also hold power in a research process, such as choosing not to respond to questions. Power was therefore understood as a dynamic concept within the research interaction (e.g. Gallagher, 2008).

Research interactions in which power differentials are reduced are suggested to increase the validity of the research, with Thomas and O'Kane (1998) having proposed that if research with young people is ethically conducted through a well-designed methodological process then

this leads to the research having increased value. Thomas and O'Kane theorised that a mechanism for addressing this imbalance of power is to find a way to empower young people to participate in the way they wish, giving them more influence and equity within the research process, and through the use of a method which may assist participants to communicate about their experiences and their world. Choice should therefore be a central tenant of research with young people, as this is a way that research design and process can increase the amount of power available to the young person throughout the research. The main choice within this research was the ability for participants to decide the topics which they brought to the interviews for discussion and the consultation group, who are described in the method chapter, deciding what the research question was.

In order for participants to have real choice, all aspects of the research and information provided has to be accessible to the young person so that they can understand it fully (Kirk, 2007). The present study therefore involved a consultation phase to ensure the research was accessible to the participant group. McLeod (2007) suggested one way of moving from power-laden adult-child discussions and establishing what is important to young people is through the use of creative and visual methodologies. A creative method, photo-elicitation, was therefore employed and will be described further within this chapter.

A protectionist agenda is argued to restrict the participation of young people in an attempt to protect them from harm (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Pinkney, 2011), however it may also act to further marginalise these young people due to a lack of representation in the literature (Carter, 2009). Looked-after young people have a range of adults involved in the decision-making around them, and can lack power and autonomy in their own lives due to having to wait for decisions to be made by adults on their behalf (Golding et al., 2006; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Whilst protection of young people is usually well intentioned, decisions to not allow young people to take part in research, due to concerns about harm, can also act to disempower young people in their involvement and form a possible barrier to participation. Time was required, therefore, to develop the trust of the social workers who held legal responsibility for the looked-after young people if the participant-led design was to be successful. Developing sufficient trust was achieved through developing the social workers' understanding of the research and what the participants would be asked to do, the approach and experience of the researcher, and the support in place for participants. These interactions thus formed an integral step in a research process which aimed to empower young people to share what is important to them through their involvement.

The research aimed to allow young people to participate in a meaningful way, and so participation and ethical research design were not viewed as a single method, question, or process but as an ethos that underpinned all aspects of the research design and process (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). As the methodology section progresses it will return to

considering the ethical stance taken by the present study, based on the ideas of power, participation, and empowerment.

3.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

The research used IPA (Smith, et al., 2009) to analyse the data. IPA was chosen as it is a technique which is used to gain a detailed understanding of the experiences of participants from a first-person perspective, and how participants make sense of these experiences and their psychological world (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith, 2011). IPA is a thematic methodology as it is inductive in its approach to coding and attempts to cluster groups of data into themes which together represent the phenomenon of interest as experienced by the participants (Madill & Gough, 2008).

IPA and the way it should be undertaken is based on clear theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, drawing upon phenomenology, idiography, and hermeneutics (Smith, et al., 2009). Smith and Osborn (2007) supported a degree of flexibility in this approach and for researchers to develop their own approach to IPA; this methodology, however, comes with an established theoretical stance and so the foundations of IPA and the influence on this research will be explored.

3.2.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is interested in the study of human experience, treating this experience as the sole object of interest (Holloway & Todres, 2003; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Through focusing on an experiential phenomena the aim of phenomenological research is to gain an understanding of what the core and essential qualities, described as the 'essence', of the phenomena are within the context in which it was studied (Holloway & Todres, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). When participants reflect on their experiences, aspects of these experiences that are usually taken for granted can be explored (Husserl in Smith, et al., 2009) and thus an understanding of what the 'essence' of the experience is becomes illuminated (Smith et al., 2009). Adolescence for looked-after young people is an example of such an everyday experience. Through facilitating participants to take a phenomenological stance about adolescence, an understanding of this phenomena from the perspective of a looked-after young person was gained (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA as a phenomenological approach rejects the notion of objectivity, instead pursuing an understanding of the world from the stance of intersubjectivity (Shaw, 2010). Individuals are viewed as a person-in-context and as a 'being-in-the-world', which theorises that the individual is always in relation to an object or another living thing within the world, rejecting the idea that experiences exist wholly within a person (Shaw, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). The way that a person understands and represents their interactions are a product of both their time and place

(Shaw, 2010; Smith, et al., 2009). From this perspective the data that are generated and the associated interpretations are co-constructed as a product of the researcher, the participant, and their relationship within that context (Finlay, 2002; Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014). This phenomenological approach has clear parallels to the theoretical perspective of adolescence as development-in-context, with adolescence being theorised as co-constructed between a young person, their context, and the people within it (e.g. Lerner & Kaufmann, 1985) and so IPA seemed well suited to this research question.

3.2.2 Hermeneutics

IPA is interested in the interpretations and meaning-making of the participants about their experiences (Smith & Osbourn, 2007; Smith et al., 2009) and involves analysis of data which transforms it from the first-person perspective of lived experience to a third-person perspective through the researcher's interpretation of the participants' meaning-making (Smith, et al., 2009). IPA views participants as able to use language to express their thoughts and emotions; it does, however, appreciate the complexity of this task. Interpretation within the analysis is, therefore, used to explore the thoughts and emotions of the participants, adding factors which are beyond what is explicitly said by the participants whilst remaining grounded in the data (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al., 2009).

An understanding of the participants' experiences and their meaning-making is gained through the researcher applying their interpretation during the analysis to the information and drawing out themes from the data at a group level (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). This represents a double hermeneutic as the researcher makes sense and meaning of the participants sense- and meaning-making (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Through gaining an understanding of the world of the participant, research aims to present not only the essence of the experience within the context in which it was formed, but also to integrate this with existing theory and knowledge (Holloway & Todres, 2003). This process of interpretation at both the individual and group level is suggested to offer a perspective on the phenomenon of interest, in this case what was important to looked-after young people during adolescence, which the participant alone does not provide (Smith et al., 2009).

3.2.3 Idiography

Idiography, the focus on the particular, influences IPA to be committed to providing focus on a particular experience for that individual. Analysis then broadens to consider the data at a more general level, the whole, and to think about patterns across participants in relation to a shared experience (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is interested in exploring the lives of a small group of individuals, as it allows analysis of rich, individual data at a deep level (Smith, 2011). IPA research therefore aims to recruit a purposive, clearly defined and relatively homogenous

sample for whom the research question may be most pertinent, which allows the reader to consider the applicability to their area or population of interest (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The comparison of a novel understanding with the extant literature is hoped to present the reader with a new perspective on an existing understanding, through introducing an analysis of the particular into an understanding of the general (Smith et al., 2009).

Due to a reduced concern about generating statements of general applicability, IPA is able to communicate interpretations of interest irrelevant of their commonality in the sample. Smith (2011) encourages the consideration of singular events or pieces of information which have a high resonance which is much greater than their size as a part of IPA, which are referred to as 'gems'. It is suggested that these 'gems' tend to be prominent moments in the interview and can be significant for both the individual and the group as a whole (Smith, 2011). These 'gems' act to inform the development of themes due to them having an illuminating quality in relation to the experience of exploration (Smith, 2015). The idiographic approach taken by IPA allows the experiences of participants which differ from the group to be represented, and the complexity of human experience to be reflected to create a more holistic understanding of a phenomena, such as adolescence (Smith et al., 2009).

3.2.4 Ethics and IPA

The theoretical underpinnings of IPA are important when considering the ethical stance of the current research and the attempt to allow looked-after young people to contribute to the literature. By focusing on the particular and aiming to gain a rich understanding of the young people who participate, the research was anticipated to provide these young people with a way of communicating with both the research literature and their local context. Whilst IPA is an interpretative methodology, the commitment to creating a coherent interpretation based on the participant's verbal data led to IPA being well-suited to presenting the experiences of looked-after young people.

3.3 Photo-elicitation

Photo-elicitation describes a method in which photographs are introduced into a research interview and are used to underpin the conversation between the researcher and participant (Harper, 2002; Lapenta, 2011; Rose, 2012). Participants are given a statement or question and asked to take photographs that reflect their response to the question, they then bring the photographs to the research interview. Through listening to their interpretations of the images they have chosen to bring to the interview, photo-elicitation can allow the researcher to gain insight into the participants' perspectives on their lives as they experience them (Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, & Phoenix, 2008). Through finding a meaningful way to ask young people about their lives, photo-elicitation as a method has been described as supporting young people

to engage with and to 'open up' during the research process (Lapenta, 2011; Smith, Gidlow, & Steel, 2012).

Whilst language continues as the means of communication, the images are used to elucidate novel information (Collier & Collier, 1986; Lapenta, 2011). It is suggested that the way participants respond to photos can not only generate more information, but information of a different kind as well (Harper, 2002; Rose, 2012). Bender, Harbour, Thorp, and Morris (2001), for instance, described participants as being able to discuss more abstract concepts which were grounded in their photographs using their own vocabulary and points of reference. A possible mechanism for this may be that the images allow participants to see an aspect of their lives from a distance, and to perceive it in a new way leading to novel interpretations by the participant (Heisley & Levy, 1991). In Bender et al. (2001) some participants referred to themselves when they featured in the photographs in the third person, creating distance, when discussing difficult topics which may undermine their social desirability.

Photo-elicitation allows participants to talk openly about a topic whilst using the photograph, or elements of it, to provide a reference point for their verbal discourse for both themselves and the researcher to use as a focus (Collier & Collier, 1986). Croghan et al. (2008) suggest that the combination of interview with photographs can allow participants to introduce hidden or unpredicted aspects of their life to the interview due to the photograph being used to introduce and validate unexpected topics. Photographs have also been suggested to facilitate the research interview with young people due to participants having a greater range of information available for discussion. The photographs act as a prompt about what they had previously reflected as being important, introducing topics of importance that are not discussed when using other methods (Darbyshire, et al., 2005).

Photo-elicitation seemed well suited to the aim of representing what was said by looked-after young people, a group that have been shown to lack power in their lives and who may have had difficulties in expressing themselves (Davies & Wright, 2008). The method is described as empowering participants to speak about aspects of themselves and their experiences which may have remained silent, in a way that an interview alone may not (Croghan et al., 2008).

3.3.1 Ethics and Photo-elicitation

Photo-elicitation is an ethically-led methodology due to its potential to empower participants and as a non-directive technique enabling participants to lead the research interview (Heisley & Levy, 1991; Lapenta, 2011). Through relinquishing control of what is brought to and discussed within the research interview, photo-elicitation has been suggested to begin to reduce the power imbalance that is inherent in research and allows the participant to better represent something from their view point (Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, & Baruchel, 2008; Packard,

2008). The method can also change an interview from a typical question-and-answer dynamic, which is not a familiar way of sharing information for many young people (Clark, 1999). Instead it involves a collaborative endeavour to understand the photographs so that they are meaningful to the researcher, an outsider to the participants' life (Heisley & Levy, 1991).

In addition to photo-elicitation, there are visual methodologies which use photographs as a part of action research, for instance Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997). This approach engages participants in a process of generating knowledge through eliciting the participants' views, with the aim of using this to drive change within a situation (Rose, 2012). Photovoice differs from photo-elicitation as following an individual interview, the meaning of the images are then discussed at a group level and a shared meaning is achieved and is fed back to policymakers. The present study incorporated some of these ideas through aiming to generate knowledge which would be used to engage in a dialogue with the wider system surrounding participants. The present study engaged a method which included the opportunity for participants to share their opinions on the results of IPA which was undertaken and to think about how they could inform future developments. Through completing the cycle of participation the present study aimed to demonstrate to participants that their contributions were highly valued and had the potential to be influential in future decision making.

3.3.2 Photo-elicitation: Analysis of the Verbal and Visual Data

Photo-elicitation typically views the photographs as tools which are used and reflected upon to produce verbal information, however within other visual research methods, the visual media is analysed and communicates information which form the findings of the research (Pink, 2012). In photo-elicitation research, however, it is more typical for research to present the photographs generated alongside verbal extracts as a form of contextual information, but with no further analysis of the images (Rose, 2012).

3.3.3 Photo-elicitation: The Importance of the Verbal

Collier and Collier's (1986) original description of photo-elicitation outlined the use of the photograph as a tool which assists in eliciting knowledge beyond what is contained within and can be obtained through the analysis of the photos alone. The application of an interview in relation to the photographs is required to move beyond the surface level and allows meanings and values which may not be visible or predicted but are strongly represented in the photograph to be shared and explored (Collier & Collier, 1986; Lapenta, 2011). Croghan et al. (2008) describes young people as using the interview to 'verbally edit' the photograph and to clarify what they are presenting.

Hodgetts, Chamberlain, and Radley (2007) introduce a perspective on the images generated which is akin to the phenomenological stance taken by IPA (Smith et al., 2009). They

describe that images have no fixed meaning and instead act as objects which participants use to relate to and communicate with others and express their view of self, using the images to explain and show, in this case to the researcher. The meaning of each image is described as fluid and a product of the maker, viewer, and the interaction between them within the context it occurs (Hodgetts et al., 2007). The meaning-making process facilitated by the image therefore continues beyond the moment in which the photograph was taken as a representation and may continue within and be dependent upon the interview.

The participant within the interview guides the researcher about how the photo is to be viewed in a way that viewing the photo-alone could not. The visual data generated by this research will, therefore, be considered and presented in the context it was intended, alongside the verbal data, as this contains the meaning and context for each of the images. The utility of the interview, in leading to a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the photographs, is counter-indicative of analysing the images independent of this verbal discussion. It would also be ethically dubious to present an analysis of the photographs in a way that misrepresents the participants and their views (Lapenta, 2011). Through analysing the photographs away from the verbal text about an experience, a power imbalance would be created in which what was said by the participant in relation to the photograph and ultimately the experience in question would be silenced, whilst the voice of the researcher was prioritised.

3.3.4 Photo-elicitation: Analysis of the Visual Data

There is much research in which the analysis of the visual media, such as the photographs, forms the focus of the analysis (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011) and similar to textual analyses there are extensive methodological techniques and writings on the analysis of the visual (e.g. Rose, 2012). Barthes (1981) introduces the idea of 'punctum' to underpin the analysis of photographs. Punctum is described as a detail within a photograph that causes a disturbance to the viewer. Barthes defines punctum as something that 'pricks' the viewer's general perception of and interest in an image and remains prominent to the viewer (Barthes, 1981). This concept resembles the idea of a 'gem' described within IPA as a moment of greater salience than its size or frequency (Smith, 2011). Mason (2011) also discusses gemstones in research, of which photo-elicitation is proposed to be one, to describe the notion of applying methods which act to illuminate an object of interest. Based upon the above, visual and verbal gems appear to be specific facets within the photo-elicitation technique which are significant at both individual and group level analysis and can be understood as illuminating the data in a novel way.

A process that underpins IPA analysis is the hermeneutic circle, in which the parts and the whole are analysed in relation to each other to provide greater insight on an experience (Smith et al., 2009). The text is examined at a group, whole level to provide understanding of

the individual parts whilst the group level is understood through examining the parts. This process is viewed as iterative, with the researcher moving their focus back and forth from the part to the whole rather than a linear process (Smith, et al., 2009). The analysis of the photographs could also be undertaken in a manner that reflects a hermeneutic circle; the image can be viewed as a part of the whole, which assist to illuminate and provide understanding of the parts, in this case the interview. Concurrently, the verbal data provide an understanding and illuminate the participants' associated meaning of the visual.

A form of analysis is proposed in which the photographs are considered alongside the verbal data throughout analysis with consideration given to visual gems, a form of punctum, which are salient from the image and act to illuminate the interpretation of the verbal data. This approach was informed by a similar theoretical stance to IPA (Smith et al., 2009), in which the researcher used the images as part of an interpretative process, moving from the verbal to the visual whilst undertaking the analysis. The approach aimed to broaden the potential analysis beyond that which is largely used in photo-elicitation research, in order to enhance the understanding of participant experience that was achieved. Through increased focus on the visual data, it was anticipated that the researcher would become able to extend the understanding gained through interpretation, with exploration of the process and outcomes of this endeavour being discussed. A reflexive diary (Shaw, 2010) was used to assist with this process, and to recognise verbal and visual gems in the data from the point of data collection through analysis and interpretation and at write up. Reflexivity will be discussed in the following section of the methodology.

A content analysis was also undertaken to allow further reflection upon the participants' responses to the task and what was contained within the images. This facilitated consideration of what was and what was not represented by the images, allowing comparison with the extant literature. This approach was informed by Croghan et al. (2008) who categorised images based on whether they featured people, significant places, or commodities. It was anticipated that the content analysis would also allow consideration of images which were not taken or aspects of the participants' lives which were not represented by the photographs (Hodgetts et al., 2007).

3.4 Reflexivity

Qualitative methodologies, including IPA, recognise the impact of the knowledge and beliefs a researcher brings to their research, with this being part of the double hermeneutic which is central to IPA research (Smith et al., 2009). During the interpretative process, the experiences of the participants are met by the experiences of the researcher and together led to the co-construction of knowledge through which the interpretations are drawn (Finlay, 2002; Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014). With every interview the researcher is presented with a new experience and data which could affect their pre-existing beliefs, and toward which they

may experience a reaction (Shaw, 2010). Within IPA these preunderstandings are referred to as fore-structures. To endeavour to understand an experience from a participant's view point involves the researcher attempting to omit, as much as possible, any fore-structures in order to engage with the lived experiences of participants and to listen and interpret what is trying to be portrayed (Finlay, 2003; Holloway & Todres, 2003).

Reflexivity describes a process in which the researcher turns their attention to the self in an attempt to become aware of the beliefs and biases they bring to the research (Shaw, 2010). This process aims to somewhat disentangle these from the phenomena of interest during the analysis, whilst also accepting their continued influence due to the impossibility of such a task (Finlay, 2003; Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014). For instance, it is suggested that reflexivity in the form of self-monitoring brings the researcher's personal experience into the public domain. Once these fore-structures become visible, they can be managed and critiqued alongside the participants' data (Finlay, 2002). It is this process that allows for a novel understanding of the area of study to emerge, and to move past a previously held understanding of the phenomena (Finlay, 2003; Shaw, 2010).

Reflexivity also possesses an ethical role in qualitative research as the aim of developing greater reflexive awareness is to reduce the researcher's perspective from dominating the research and therefore silencing what is asserted by the research participants (Finlay, 2003; Shaw, 2010). Reflexive practices are therefore suggested to increase the transparency and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Finlay, 2002), and are a means of increasing its quality and rigour (Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014) thus making the practices integral to this research.

Reflexivity takes a range of forms in the qualitative research literature (Finlay, 2002; Shaw, 2010). Shaw (2010) suggests the importance of self-exploration prior to the research beginning as this has the benefit of allowing researchers to more easily recognise in the research process when interactions with participants and their data has led to the researcher's fore-structures evolving. An interview was therefore conducted between the researcher and academic research supervisor, to raise the researcher's awareness of their fore-structures prior to any of the research interviews being conducted. In line with Finlay (2003) a reflexive diary was also completed throughout the research process, this acted as a way of recording and exploring existing presuppositions, with the time prioritised to complete the journal providing an opportunity for greater self-understanding through the reflexive analysis. Alongside this, research supervision was used to ensure that there was a continued consideration of the situated nature of the data, alongside consideration of power as a potential influence on the research interaction.

Shaw (2010) suggests that authors use separate reflexive sections when writing up their research so to be transparent in demonstrating the impact of the researcher on the research. This

is the approach was taken throughout the present study to clarify the researcher's position throughout the process. These reflexive boxes whilst being largely based on self-reflection considered power and participation as an underlying theme.

3.5 Conclusion

The present study perceived young people as capable and deserving of expressing their experiences, but with recognition of a possible power imbalance that needed to be overcome to allow the expression to occur. The research therefore aimed to develop a design which did not reiterate a perspective of looked-after young people as unable to articulate their views, but instead employed an approach which allowed the research to explore what was important to the young people from their point of view (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). A creative method was used, photo-elicitation, to support looked-after young people to discuss their experiences, with both the verbal and visual data being subjected to analysis. As the research aimed to explore the experiences of being a looked-after adolescent, and to contribute a rich account which represented what is shared by the participants, IPA was used to analyse the verbal data. The visual data was analysed alongside this, based upon a curiosity about its ability to further illuminate the research's understanding of what is important to looked-after young people during adolescence.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHOD

This exploratory study aimed to understand what is important to young people within the context of being looked-after during the adolescent period of development. Based on a review of the literature on participation in research, a participant-led, three phase design was used. Phase 1 was a consultation phase in which the perspectives of young people were sought to inform the data collection in the main study (Phase 2). Phase 3 involved individual participant feedback meetings to report outcomes and to explore the experience of participating in the research. This chapter will outline the procedure for the three phases.

4.1 Phase 1: Consultation

4.1.1 Aim

The aim of the consultation phase was to increase the accessibility and understanding of the research and research materials for all participants, including the research question given to drive the photography task. The consultation also aimed to generate an understanding of how elements of the research may support or limit the participants' ability to participate fully in the main study.

4.1.2 Recruitment

The looked-after young people's participation group from the local authority whom the main study sample were recruited from were approached to consult on the research design and procedure. The participation group approached was already established and was made up of young people who are experienced in consulting on local authority processes and decisions, as well as research projects. The researcher attended a meeting to describe the research and asked if there would be interest in participating in a consultation meeting about the research. Five young people aged 12-15 volunteered to participate in the consultation meeting, this group included both new and experienced members; and the meeting occurred one month later. A week before the meeting, the group co-ordinator contacted the participants who had volunteered to be a part of the consultation group to confirm if they still wanted to take part in the consultation.

4.1.3 Ethical considerations

Members of the consultation group were given time to consider their participation away from the pressure of the initial meeting, and to change their mind if they wished in between expressing initial interest and the consultation. Written notes were taken at a group level, with no information recorded at an individual level so contributions were not identifiable as originating from individuals. Following the meeting these notes were typed up and any individual sheets that participants had written on were shredded. At the beginning of the

meeting confidentiality was discussed and the group agreed to not talk about what people said outside the meeting.

4.1.4 Materials

The session with the consultation group was attended with a copy of pre-designed template documents, these were: the participant information sheet; participant consent form and photography task instructions. Three A3 sheets of paper with possible photography task questions and post-it notes for participants to record ideas on were also used.

4.1.5 Procedure

The consultation group met with the researcher for one hour. This meeting was co-facilitated by the co-ordinator of the group, with group members choosing when to physically come and go, and so to engage and disengage, from the discussions and which tasks of the consultation to engage with.

Discussion was held about the general concept of the research, in addition to specific tasks, the first of which was discussing the question which underpinned the photography task, with the following options being offered to the group for discussion prior to them re-wording the questions:

1. What do I wish other people understood about me and my life? This was rewritten as "What do I want other people to understand more about me?"
2. What do I wish I could understand better about myself and my life? This was rewritten as "What do I want to understand more about myself and my life?"
3. What are the important things to me in my life at the moment?

The group then went on to consider the recruitment process and how they would wish to be approached, recruited, and participate in the research. This discussion considered the location of meetings, who they would want to be present at different stages in the process or if they would like to have the meetings alone, and how much time they would like to have to complete the photography task. The group also discussed any worries that they could anticipate a young person might have about participating and ways of trying to reduce these worries.

The session with the consultation group was attended with pre-designed template documents, with feedback being used to adapt these resources for the research. Participants were given pens and were welcome to write on their copy of the templates, however the researcher also had a copy which he made notes on. Whilst it would have been ideal for the group to design the templates themselves, this approach of using draft materials was chosen as pragmatic due to the limited time available with the group. This approach also ensured that the documents met ethical requirements through inclusion of essential information, such as risks of participation and the right to withdraw.

4.1.6 Findings and Adaptation of Research Design

The group expressed an initial lack of confidence about what they would photograph for all the options given for research questions; however with encouragement they began to generate ideas. The group expressed a preference for question 3, finding it possible to generate ideas for what they would photograph, such as: family, dog/pet, music, school book or education, siblings, and foster siblings. In comparison, the group suggested that they would not know what to photograph for questions 1 or 2 and were clear that these questions were more difficult, particularly question 1. Discussion of the possible research questions included feedback by a member of the consultation group that if they were initially interested and were then shown questions 1 or 2 they may have chosen to not participate. It was decided that the research would proceed with question 3 as this had led to independent reflection about what to photograph.

The group gave feedback on the pre-designed documents, suggesting the documents were of a length that was off putting, and suggested the use of bullet points to break up the information. Group members described being overwhelmed when they saw the documents, and suggested this may be a factor that would lead to refusal from participants who were unsure about participating in the study. The group also commented that the documents appeared quite black and white and were presented in an 'adult' way, their suggestion was to use pictures and colour. These suggestions led to the adaptation of all the documents used within the main study (Appendix 1-3).

When considering the recruitment process, it was suggested by the group that they would like to know in advance if someone would be coming to meet them to discuss a project. One young person was clear that they disliked it when people just turned up without warning. The group described that having as much choice as possible throughout the research process was important. The group, for instance, stated they would be happy to come to the social care offices for the meetings and research interviews, however as they are familiar with the offices through attending the participation group other options, such as interviews at home, were important. The group suggested that they would like the option of their foster carer being present at the beginning of the process, and maybe throughout. These discussions were incorporated into the final design of the main study, described below.

Discussion of any worries that the consultation group may have if there were to take part in the research led to consideration of the use of photographs within the dissemination of the project. Whilst the group explained that they would not mind the use of their photographs, there was ambivalence about the use of photos containing their faces or the faces of other people. This led to a discussion with participants in the main study to explain that it was possible for their photos to be used for the interview but not be used for the report and further dissemination. A process was also designed, to be undertaken at the end of the research

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interview, so that each photo was reviewed on an image-by-image basis, to ensure only photographs that participants and their social worker consent to being seen by others are published.

Reflexive Box 1 – Consultation as empowering

During the consultation the group were able to share their opinions, such as the want for choice. Importantly, however, none of their suggestions, such as the option to have someone they know in the room whilst we talk, were freely given, but instead were in response to my questioning which then led to further discussion. This appeared to be an example of an adult researcher's power to empower, and suggests a need for ongoing attention to power and how to empower through the consultation process, with the practice of consultation not being automatically empowering in and of itself. The need for me to use my power to empower during the consultation phase had relevance to the main study as photo-elicitation is a technique which can be used to empower the participant, if conducted in a way that truly empowered.

Whilst the consultation group were experienced in the process of consulting, and had consulted on research before, a group member asked for clarification midway through the meeting as to what the word 'research' actually meant. This was powerful in indicating the difficulties that the young people may have in feeling able to participate. The young person's lack of understanding had been hidden previously in the meeting and presumably remained hidden whilst consulting on research previously. Based upon this, regular opportunities were provided for questions or clarification during the main study rather than solely depending on participants to clarify their queries independently. An attempt to normalise misunderstanding and to encourage the participants to be open if they had a question or did not understand was undertaken. When explaining the research to participants, I used the example of a participant who had not understood the word 'research' within their introduction to the research. Time was also spent with participants prior to the research interview to develop a relationship in which they felt more comfortable to express such issues.

I was struck by how much of the session depended on my guidance and questioning. I had anticipated that the group, who were experienced in consultation, would be comfortable to take a more active role in the discussion. This assisted me to appreciate the power to empower, but also the need to be thorough and considered in my approach so that participants were able to speak and share what was important to them.

4.2 Main Study (Phase 2)

4.2.1 Aims

The present study aimed to explore what is important to looked-after young people during adolescence. Participants were asked to take photographs in response to the question: *'What are the important things in your life at the moment?'*. The present study also aimed to consider the application of a participant-led, photo-elicitation methodology with looked-after young people.

4.2.2 Research Process

Figure 1 provides a diagram of the research process that was undertaken. This is presented to provide context to the following sections of the method.

4.2.3 Ethics

As the research was being conducted within a local authority setting, the research was subject to both university ethical procedures and the processes of the local authority. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Leeds School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee on 20th January 2015 (Appendix 4; Ethics Reference numbers: 15-0230; 16-0001; 16-0088; 16-0106). There were three further amended ethics applications submitted due to difficulties recruiting for the research; these amendments will be outlined within the main study's procedure, below. Ethical approval was therefore applied for and granted by the same committee on: 18th September 2015, 18th January 2016, 5th April 2016. Permission was granted by the local authority from whom the sample was recruited, following completion of their Research Governance Framework, on 15th May 2015 (Appendix 5).
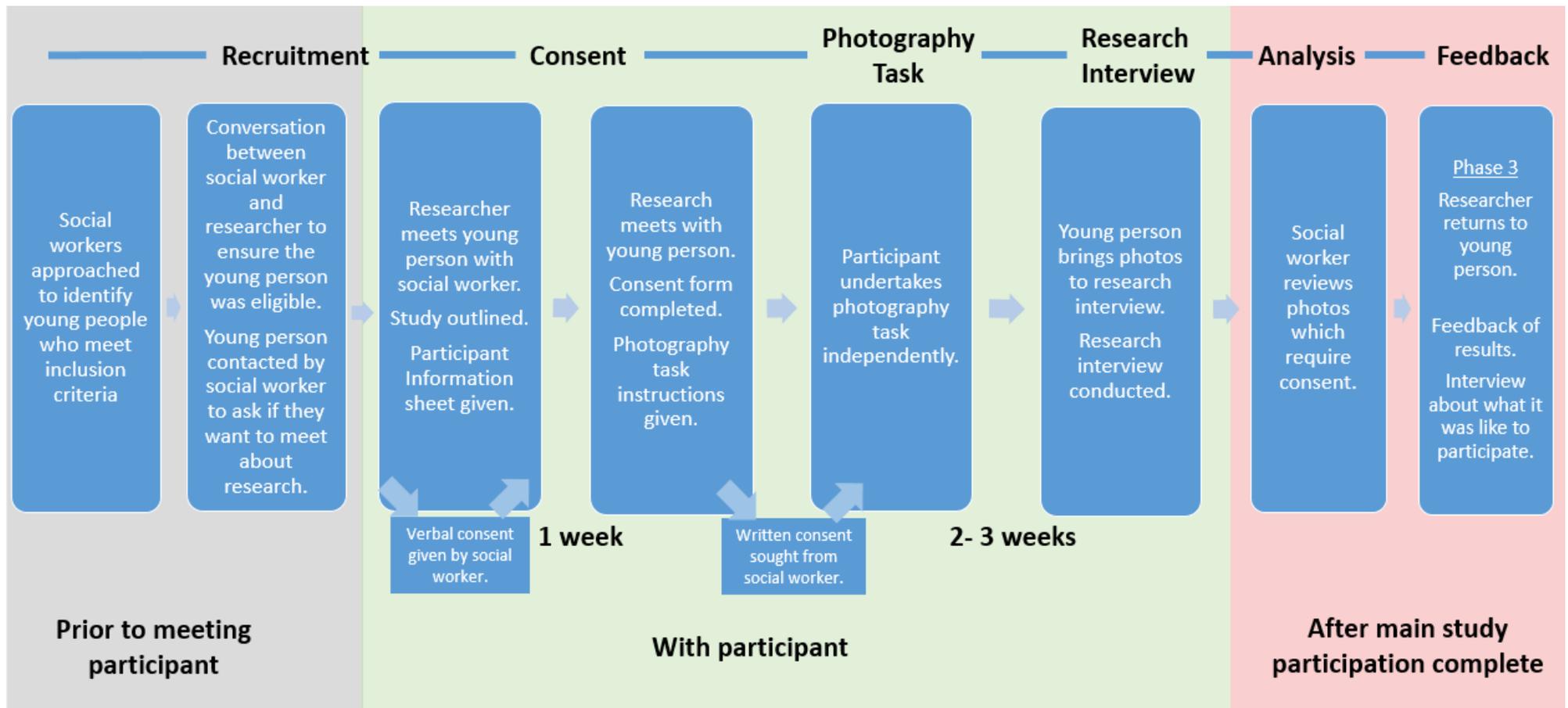
Figure 1. Diagram of Research Process**.**

There were significant ethical considerations within this study, discussed below, with particular consideration being required due to the use of photo-elicitation, and the additional vulnerabilities of the participant group as they were under the age of 16 and were looked-after.

4.2.3.1 Consent

The present study engaged young people aged 13-15 years. When conducting research with young people, those under 16 cannot legally give informed consent to participate. The young people must possess sufficient understanding of the research, however, so that they are able to give their informed assent (World Medical Association, 2013). In order to give their assent, young people need to understand the research and their role in it, that it is their choice to participate, and that they can withdraw from the research at any point (UNICEF, 2002). It was the aim of the consultation phase of the research to increase the accessibility and understanding of the research for all participants.

As a participant-led research design it was important that all the participants felt like they were in control of their participation in the research. Whilst verbal consent to meet with participants was required from the allocated social worker for the young person, full consent for participation was only sought for following communication with the young person confirming their assent. Once a young person had expressed interest, full informed consent was sought from the young person's social worker within Children's Services, who holds legal responsibility for them as a person under 16 years of age.

UNICEF (2002) suggested consent is an ongoing process, and so consent was verbally re-explored at the beginning of the research interview, with their right to withdraw being reiterated. Participants were also given a detailed information sheet, with additional copies being made available throughout the research process, for them to return to for clarification if necessary. Use of the photo-elicitation methodology allowed participants to control the information that is brought to the research interview, but each participant was also reminded regularly that they did not have to talk about anything which they do not wish to. In addition, an agreement was made at the beginning of the interview with each participant about how they would like to communicate if they wanted to stop, take a break, or move on from a particular question or photo.

4.2.3.2 Anonymity

It is possible to publish work that has used photo-elicitation and not include any example photographs (e.g. Smith, et al., 2012), particularly if the photos are used as a point of discussion and do not form part of the analysis. Presenting the words alone, however, appears to reduce the impact of the participants' communication, whilst presentation of words and the relevant photo together allows clear communication and a greater impact (Smith et al., 2012). Pyle (2013) suggested that inclusion of quotations without the accompanying photograph leads

to part of the young person's account being missed or silenced, something that this research aimed to avoid. It was suggested by Pyle that photographs are akin to the quotations commonly shared in publications as a communicative tool. It has been discussed in the literature that obscuring images can alter their apparent meaning (Wiles et al., 2008) and, based on Pyle, may involve a misrepresentation of participants. The dissemination of the research will therefore included quotations from the research interviews presented alongside the photographs taken, thus consideration around the anonymity of participants was crucial. Importantly, however, there was no obligation for the images to be used within a public forum in order to take part in the research.

The consent process therefore involved a conversation about the limits of anonymity, which outlined: the intended use of the photographs, the reasoning behind inclusion of this material, and clarity about how the use of such visual materials commonly makes anonymity difficult to maintain (Clark, 2006). Each participant and their social worker were asked to consent to the use of images in the final report and future dissemination of the research, on an image-by-image basis (Appendix 6). Social workers were only approached following the consent of the young person to present the images. This allowed the young people some control over how their photos were used.

4.2.3.3 Confidentiality

All participants were offered the opportunity to create a pseudonym for themselves to be used throughout the study and its dissemination. If they did not choose one, a pseudonym was assigned to them. It was explained to participants that their personal details would be kept confidential, and the use of a pseudonym would assist in maintaining confidentiality. Hill (2005) discussed this as an additional consideration required in qualitative research, where presentation of participant data makes maintaining confidentiality difficult. If the young person or their story was known to others they may be identifiable due to the content of their data, even if names are changed and photos are not used or are pixelated. The possible lack of confidentiality was explained to participants during the consent process, as a pseudonym does not give full confidentiality; this enabled participants to give their informed assent.

> Reflexive Box 2 – Pseudonyms and Anonymisation
>
> The use of a pseudonym is common practice in research and is an *"ethical norm"* (p. 4, Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011). Whilst considering confidentiality and anonymity in this research, a participant requested that their own name be used for the research rather than a pseudonym. The participant chose not to give a pseudonym and requested that I picked one for them.
>
> A preference to use participants' own names was also discussed during the group consultation (Phase 1). This led to critical reflection of the blanket practice of using pseudonyms and the motivations for doing so prior to the main study. I explored this issue

within the literature, and discussed it in supervision and with senior management within the local authority. It was decided that a pseudonym would be used to protect participants from harm, which may have been largely based upon the assumption that naming participants is dangerous (Moore, 2011). This response, however, emphasised a view of the 'young person' as unable to make the decisions about their life, with the need for adults to intervene and exert their power. Whilst this decision was protective, it acted to highlight the limitations of participatory research to provide young participants with power and listen to them, as ultimately adult decisions continued to overrule. Grinyer (2002), in addition, suggested the practice of anonymisation leads to participants feeling they have lost ownership of their data. In this instance, I did not have the power to empower.

Moore (2011) suggested that the exact point in which anonymisation became the norm is unclear, however it possesses such a status in research. An interesting observation was the lesser concern about the use of participant photographs in the dissemination of the research, which could include faces, rather than the use of names. I speculated that the novelty of the photo-elicitation technique and the use of photographs allowed a level of flexibility that was not available when considering the use of pseudonyms, as this was a largely universal practice.

4.2.3.4 Consent to Photograph Others

There were additional ethical considerations around consent due to the research employing a visual method, which involved the production of photographs that may contain other individuals. It is reasonable to expect that in a public place a photograph may be taken which contains other individuals. Photographs in locations that are not public, however, such as a home or school environment have received additional consideration in literature using photo-elicitation. Smith et al. (2012) gave guidance to participants to only take photographs of others in situations in which they would be comfortable being photographed. Smith et al., however, did not use the photographs taken by participants in the dissemination of their research. This approach, therefore, seemed inadequate as the present study intended to use participant photographs in the thesis and further dissemination. It was therefore decided to follow the approach of Pini (2014) in which, in addition to providing the guidance used by Smith et al., participants were told if they featured people centrally in photographs in ways that are beyond what could be photographed in the public domain (e.g. people walking around) then consent forms must be completed by those individuals. This consent included permission to use the photograph in analysis and dissemination. This approach was chosen, rather than post-photograph pixilating of faces, as it has been discussed in the literature that obscuring images can alter their apparent meaning (e.g. Wiles et al., 2008). This was clearly explained to participants, and they were given consent forms to use in these circumstances (Appendix 6).

Participants were also given guidance about this on the photography task sheet (Appendix 3), and asked to review this sheet during the period that they were taking photographs.

The consent process used was additionally complex if the person captured in the photograph was a young person under 16 as consent was also required by the person who holds parental responsibility for them. When appropriate consent was not gained, whilst these photographs were included in the interview and visual analysis, they are typically not included in any dissemination of the research. There was a photograph, however, which was salient in the analysis and so seemed important in explaining the results but could not feature in the research in its full form due to a lack of consent. Through consultation with the academic supervisor and social worker for this young person this image was included but with post-pixilation.

4.2.3.5 Data Protection and Storage

Consideration was given to the storage of data due to threats to confidentiality and anonymity if data which did not have consent to be shared was available to those outside the research team, especially due to the additional risks to those who are in care against the wishes of their birth family. An encrypted audio-recording device was used to record all interviews. When interviews were completed, the audio recording and images were stored on the password-protected university N-drive within separate folders. The recordings, images, and transcripts will be held until September 2018, which is in accordance with University of Leeds policy. Only the research team were allowed to access the original recordings and images. Transcribed interviews were stored separately to any personal details held about participants (i.e. contact details) which were held on the researcher's laptop in password-protected and hidden files; and were deleted at study end. Memory sticks were not used to store or transfer data.

A research mobile phone was used to communicate with participants, for instance to check on the progress on the photo task and to answer unresolved questions which participants had. Based on the approach of Collinge (2013), the phone was password-protected and participants were stored within this phone under a pseudonym name, which was different from the one used in dissemination of the research.

4.2.3.6 Photos and Interview Content that Indicate Risk

Participants were asked to photograph things (e.g. objects, places) that helped communicate the aspects of their lives that were important to them. Participants were asked not to take photographs that could place them in danger and the researcher worked with the participants to think about potential situations to avoid photographing in order to minimise risk. It was still possible, however, that participants could take photographs which indicated they were at risk, other people were at risk, or that indicated criminal activity. A process for these circumstances was designed and explained to participants during the photography task-setting session, and was included on the photography task instruction sheet (Appendix 3). Participants

were informed that any photos which indicated risk, along with interview content indicating similar, would lead to a discussion with the young person's social worker, who would be notified immediately. It was explained that no action would be taken without first discussing these with the young person. When this was discussed with the consultation group, the group explained they are familiar with the limits of confidentiality within the context of possible risk.

4.2.4 Recruitment

4.2.4.1 Inclusion/exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were generated using a judgement sampling approach (Marshall, 1996), in which the criteria were designed so that an appropriate sample to answer the research question could be recruited.

Inclusion criteria

The research recruited young people:

- Aged 13-16, so that some time in care remained, to focus on how the context of being looked-after had impacted on adolescent development, rather than the context of transition into legal independence.
- In foster care (rather than placed at home or adoptive placements) so to capture what it was to be looked-after rather than in a stable placement that was planned to progress to adulthood.
- Who had been in care for at least one year, so that participants were relatively stable and not in the process of a recent transition.
- For whom the local authority held full parental responsibility, as they are placed under a full care order. This was for both theoretical reasons and practical reasons, to allow for the consent process to be as simple as possible. It was felt if multiple adult parties have the ability to prevent a young person participating in the research, this prevents the young person from 'owning' their consent and the decision being based on their interest.
- Who lived within a 15 mile radius of the population city's local authority base. Due to the practicalities of the multiple phases of the research design further travel was not possible for participants or the researcher due to budget restrictions.

Exclusion criteria

The research did not recruit people:

- Who were not fluent in English
- Who were deemed to be too vulnerable by the young person's allocated social worker.

- Who were deemed to not have the capacity to reflect on their experiences and articulate interpretations verbally by their social worker. Although the researcher endeavoured to meet the needs of all participants (e.g. through visual material), unfortunately, funding was not available to explore alternative communication techniques that could enable participation of learning disabled or deaf participants.

Young people who had accessed a child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) in the past 12 months were excluded from participating in the research due to concerns about the impact of exploring emotive material as part of their participation. The exclusion criteria were amended during the recruitment phase to allow young people who access a CAMHS service to also participate. As a result of this, an explicit conversation was undertaken with each allocated social worker about the young person and their current level of distress, vulnerability, and risk prior to meeting with them. A named CAMHS clinician was also made aware of the young person's participation in the research.

4.2.4.2 Recruitment procedure

A population of looked-after young people were identified in a northern English city in which the local authority had been acknowledged as valuing participation. Support for the research was generated through meeting with the Participation Worker for the local authority, and the Looked-After Children's Service Manager.

Whilst it was hoped for the consent process to be led by the young people, it was necessary to recognise the role of each young person's social worker as a 'gatekeeper' as it was through them that consent for the young people aged under 16 years to participate was granted. The researcher therefore held meetings with the Looked-After Children teams to establish 'research allies' within the service, who would generate and maintain momentum for the research internally.

The researcher initially attended the Looked-After Children's team meetings to describe the research and provided brief information about the research to all social workers (Appendix 7). Through meeting with the team in person to outline the research, it was hoped that the social work team would get a sense of the research and researcher on a more individual level. During this meeting, concerns about the research were discussed and the researcher attempted to offer clarity over what would be expected as a social worker for a young person who was participating. Areas of additional burden were identified as including: reviewing their caseloads, arranging and facilitating the meetings with each young person, considering consent for interested young people, and reviewing their photographs. It was hoped this transparency would reduce the concerns of social workers and allowed them to be comfortable considering the young people they were responsible for.

Social workers who were interested in supporting young people on their caseload to participate were identified at the end of this initial meeting and in the weeks that followed. These social workers were asked to consider all young people on their caseload in line with the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and identified all young people who meet these criteria. A meeting was arranged with the young person, facilitated by their social worker. The researcher accompanied the social worker to meet the young people in order to describe the research in person.

Prior to the initial meeting, based on the consultation feedback, participants were informed that someone would be attending with their social worker to discuss a potential research project. If the meeting was a pre-arranged visit by the social worker, the researcher either attended at the beginning or end of the social worker's meeting with the young person so they did not have access to any unnecessary personal information about the young person. This was the first contact the young person had with the research and the researcher; meeting in person was deemed important so that the young people got a sense of the research and researcher, and how they would be treated in the research process.

During the initial meeting there was an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the research, and importantly, to begin to get to know the researcher. The young person was encouraged to take a week to consider their participation, at which point they were contacted by phone by the researcher to discuss their consent. This gap of a week was to give the young person a chance to read the participant information sheet (Appendix 1) and reflect upon whether or not they would like to take part in the study. It was anticipated reflection period would also reduce the chance that participants consented due to the pressure of the meeting and the inherent power imbalances. If during the follow-up phone contact there was an expression of interest in participating, completion of the consent form was undertaken at the next meeting when the photography task was set. If contact had not been made within 14 days, it was assumed that the young person had chosen to not participate.

4.2.5 Sample

The researched aimed to gain a rich understanding of the lives of participants using IPA. Smith et al. (2009) propose a suitable sample size for doctoral research using IPA is between 4 and 10 interviews, as this allows the detailed analysis that is required (Smith, 2011b). Smith et al. (2009) are clear that larger numbers of participants within an IPA study does not indicate better quality work.

A sample of six was recruited to complete the photo-elicitation interview. Two young people were approached but declined to take part, one in between the initial meeting and the photo task setting session and one in between receiving the information about the study and the first meeting occurring. Participants were aged 13-15 ($M = 14.33$), there were three males and

three females, and all lived in foster care and were looked-after by a local authority in a northern English city. An initial scoping exercise was completed which concluded there would be a sufficient number of young people to meet this sample size from a single local authority population.

4.2.6 Photo Task Procedure

Following the initial meeting participants had the choice of where to complete subsequent meetings and the research interview, either at home, the social care offices, or the University of Leeds. All meetings were completed at the participants' homes. Participants also had the option to have an adult companion present during the research process if they desired, with a confidentiality form being created for this purpose (Appendix 8). No participant utilised this. During the second meeting the photography task was explained and participants were given the question "*What are the important things in your life at the moment?*". Participants then had two to three weeks to complete the task by taking photographs in response to this question. Participants were given a photography task information sheet (Appendix 3) to take away with them to remind them about what was discussed in this meeting, such as what to do if they want to include others in their photos. After one week participants were contacted by phone to ask how they were doing with the task, and to offer any support or reassurance they required to undertake the task. Participants were offered the opportunity to use a digital camera, supplied by the research team, however two chose to use their own device/mobile phone to take the photographs.

A further meeting was completed following completion of the photography task during which the research interview was undertaken. The research interviews last between 35 and 72 minutes. At this point the researcher took a copy of each of the photographs and stored them on a laptop, as previously described.

4.2.7 Interview Schedule

An interview schedule was created based on the protocol of Johnson, Sharkey, Dean, McIntosh, and Kubena (2011) and their description of the SHOWeD technique in a photo-elicitation study (Appendix 9). The SHOWeD acronym (See, Happening, Our, Why, and Do) was originally described by Shaffer (1984) in a piece of community health research, who suggested the use of this technique to guide questioning in research interviews. Johnston et al. initially asked participants to select photos, encouraging participants with many photographs to select the ones they would like to discuss or that they think are the most interesting. Johnson et al. described that this practice led to a collaborative discussion, with the participant introducing the topics for discussion. This technique was chosen as it appeared to have the benefit of a semi-structured interview, such as providing structure and pre-consideration of the wording of

questions, whilst maintaining the flexibility and participant-led nature of an unstructured interview (Smith, et al., 2009).

Collinge (2013) used the SHOWeD technique with adopted young people, though additional questions were included about photos that were not taken and things that are not shown in any of the photographs. This was used as a way of allowing participants to talk about aspects of their lives which they could not access to take photos of, or could not find a way to show. Hodgetts et al. (2007) suggested that this process allowed the understanding of the participants' experiences to be fuller, and allowed understanding to go further than discussion of solely the photographs taken would allow. Thus, whilst the Johnson et al. schedule was used to structure the interview in relation to each photograph, questioning was adapted in line with Collinge, to try and explore what was important to participants through also discussing that which was not-photographed.

4.2.8 Pilot Studies

4.2.8.1 Self-Pilot

A self-pilot was completed, at the outset of the research, to inform the researcher's understanding of the possible processes from a participant perspective. The lead researcher was given the question *"What is it that you would like to understand more about yourself?",* one of the options given to the consultation group for discussion. There was then a two week period in which photographs were taken prior to an interview with the academic supervisor from the research team. Reflections following this process were used when considering the design of the research.

Reflexive Box 3 – Self-Pilot

Feelings of anxiety throughout the process of the self-pilot were noted. Concerns focused on the interviewer's opinion about the quality of photographs taken, and worries about the relevance of the photographs to the question. A further pertinent worry was about what the question was 'really' asking, which was particularly interesting as the question had been created by myself. When I came to hold the participant role, however, a lack of clarity was experienced. These observations supported the need for a consultation phase to increase the accessibility of the research for participants, with the aim of increasing task and question clarity. As a result of the self-pilot and consultation, it was decided to proceed with the clearer and more concrete question "What are the important things in your life at the moment?".

The availability of a clear rationale for the task and an understanding of the purpose of the research during the self-pilot supported motivation to undertake the photography task, despite recognised difficulties. During the interview, a positive relationship with the interviewer

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was documented as supporting openness and reducing feelings of exposure. A design was therefore created which allowed multiple interactions between researcher and participant to encourage a relationship to form, and for understanding of the research to be explored and developed so that participants understood what they were participating toward.

The taking of the first photo was perceived as a large step during the self-pilot, and avoidance of this task was present. Once the first photo was taken, however, subsequent photography occurred more easily. It was therefore decided that the researcher would contact the participants after a week to encourage them to begin the task and to support them with task completion.

There is a general omission of self-pilots in research which appeared curious due to the utility noted in this research, and the pilot enabling possible challenges being highlighted that then could be considered prior to commencement of the main study (Sampson, 2004).

4.2.8.2 Pilot with Young Person

The first participant of the research was also treated as a pilot for the research process. Supervision was undertaken following the research interview with the first participant to allow consideration of the experience of this process in order to inform how to proceed with the further participants. Based on the first interview being successful, with the participant engaging with the photo-elicitation task and bringing a range of photos for discussion to the interview it was agreed to continue with the design as it was originally planned.

4.2.9 Data Analysis

4.2.9.1 Descriptive Analysis

Contextual information was gathered for each participant, and these are shared as pen portraits in the Analysis section. It was decided that this would be gathered at the end of the interview, so to allow the interview to remain unshaped by this. At the beginning of the interview the researcher attempted to only be aware of the young person's age and their suitability for the research based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Therefore all information in the interview was introduced by the participant.

Reflexive Box 4 – Recruitment and gatekeeping

During the recruitment process there was a need to have conversations with social workers, as the gatekeepers, about potential participants, and to explore their eligibility for the research prior to meeting the young person. This interaction regularly involved social workers providing information about the young people which was beyond what was asked for and required, and included information of a personal nature. It was the aim of the research, as a participant-led design, for the young people to control all information that was available about

them; however this participant-led approach was undermined by the gatekeepers. This sharing of information may have been to 'protect and prepare' me for some of the realities within the participants' lives, but it also led to a reflection about a general lack of privacy and confidentiality about the young people's lives. Foster carers, in addition, also shared information of a personal nature about participants throughout the research process. As the recruitment process continued a conversation about the research being participant-led was more explicit, with an explanation given about my want to begin the interview with minimal information. This approach reduced the sharing of participant information, but did not eradicate the practice. This continued to be within my thinking as a newly developed fore-structure about lack of privacy and confidentiality, alongside an experience and expectation of openness and disclosure in relation to this group.

4.2.9.2 IPA Analysis Process

IPA is based on clear theoretical underpinning, and the way in which it should be undertaken is outlined by Smith, et al. (2009), this procedure was followed and will be outlined. Analysis was conducted as the interviews were completed and transcribed. Time restrictions did not make it pragmatic to wait to begin the analysis until after all the research interviews had been completed. Smith et al. (2009) signify the importance of acknowledging the knowledge and thoughts that are forming through each analysis process. It was hoped that through use of a reflexive diary and research supervision that these thoughts would be acknowledged and the impact of the data analysis and modified fore-structures on future interviews would be reduced.

Following each interview the researcher made initial notes of their thoughts and observations based on the whole interview prior to reading the transcript. Analysis of each interview transcript was began by the researcher initially becoming embedded in and familiar with the data through reading and re-reading the interview transcripts alongside the photographs, as well as listening to the recordings of the interview. Smith et al. encourage this to be a slow and repeated process. Following multiple re-readings of the transcript further initial thoughts and observations were noted. Smith et al. propose this allows analysis to be more focused on what is in the data, as ideas and interpretations are put aside at this stage for future evaluation. The researcher then systemically reviewed the transcripts on a line-by-line basis and recorded anything of interest. As described by Smith et al. the researcher, using different colours, recorded descriptive (what was said, the context and subject), linguistic (the words that were used by participants), and conceptual (engaging with the data more abstractly and integrating with conceptual thinking) observations. This line-by-line analysis aimed to facilitate analytical thinking through the researcher connecting with the participants' intended meanings within each word, phrase, and sentence. When analysis became more conceptual in nature, a shift from what was actually said toward an understanding of what participants were attempting

to discuss was undertaken. This process involved the integration of participant data with the experiences and knowledge of the researcher. At this stage the interpretation was based on combining the knowledge held prior to the interview with the understanding of the participants' world which had formed and been acquired through the analysis.

The researcher utilised two columns either side of the transcribed data, the right-hand column was populated with the above descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual exploratory comments. It was the aim of these exploratory comments to signify the areas of importance about the interview, which then began to form the emergent themes which were recorded in the left-hand column. These initial emergent themes were numerous and varied, and through academic supervision connections began to be established between each of these themes in order to structure the data from each participant. This analysis continued until it was the belief of the researcher and the academic supervisor that the data had been sufficiently and thoroughly explored. An example of a page of individual IPA analysis, with annotation, is provided (Appendix 10).

Once the IPA process was complete for the first participant's account, the same procedure was replicated with each subsequent interview transcript as the interviews were completed and transcribed. The aim was to engage with the data of each interview as independent of each other and put any fore-structures aside, so that patterns in themes are genuine and embedded within the data. Total exclusion of the knowledge and insights previously gained, however, was not possible, and these are likely to have been present during further analysis. The use of supervision, and detailed exploration of the analysis was utilised to ensure the data and interpretations were coherent and trustworthy (Elliott, Fisher, & Rennie, 1999). Once this process was complete for each interview, the analysis moved from an individual level to group level analysis to begin to explore patterns across participants. This reflects a hermeneutic circle in which the parts and the whole are analysed in relation to each other to provide greater insight. The aim of this process was to make the interpretation of the parts and the whole coherent with one and another, as the themes of the analysis should be grounded in the individual data which forms the group (Smith, et al., 2009). This was repeated until the researcher and academic supervisor felt the data had been sufficiently interrogated and provided an answer to the research question.

4.2.9.3 Analysis of Photos

As part of the analysis procedure, the photographs took a more central role than in other photo-elicitation studies. As previously described, there was a theoretically-based curiosity about the ways that the photographs, and elements of them, may act as visual 'gems' which illuminate the analysis, similar to the verbal 'gems' in IPA (Smith, 2011).

The images were present throughout the analysis of the verbal data, and were analysed based on the IPA procedure described. Time was spent viewing and reviewing the images, and initial thoughts were noted. Images were then constantly available for consideration whilst verbal data was being analysed, with focus moving regularly from the verbal to the visual. During the verbal analysis further notes were made about the images, with a particular focus on aspects of the images that resonated with the researcher, interpreted as a form of punctum (Barthes, 1981). Toward the end of the verbal analysis all images were then given a prolonged viewing and considered alongside the emerging themes. Images that resonated with the researcher became the focus of discussion in supervision to gain assistance in recognising and elucidating the visual gem they provided, to ensure they were coherent with the themes generally. A written account of the process of using the visual within the analysis for a participant's data is provided (Appendix 11).

4.3 Feedback of Research Findings and on Research Process (Phase 3)

Much participation work that occurs with young people fails to complete the process by feeding back to the young people about the outcomes of the research. It is at this outcome stage, however, that young people experience the full empowerment made possible through the process (McLeod, 2007). The researcher therefore returned to the participants of the main study and discussed the outcomes of the study at a group level. There was an emphasis on impact of their participation and any decisions or change following their involvement, due to research previously indicating the benefits of feeding back the results of their involvement to participants, for instance in developing feelings of empowerment (e.g. Sinclair, 2004). The researcher also separately returned to the consultation group from phase 1 to feedback how their participation had impacted on the research.

4.3.1 Aims

The feedback phase had three aims: to share the findings of the research with participants so that they felt heard and to find out what this feedback process was like; to find out what it was like to participate in a photo-elicitation, participant-led methodology; and to complete a credibility check of the findings.

4.3.2 Procedure

Participants initially consented to this meeting during the main study consent process, as it was included in the consent form (Appendix 2). Participants were first provided with a reminder copy of the participant information sheet (Appendix 1) to ensure they continued to understand the role of the meeting. Participants then reiterated their consent to the meeting, and to the meeting being recorded.

During this meeting participants were audio-recorded, and the data was handled following the same process as the main study. Ethical approval was re-granted to include the recording of this meeting. Recording was undertaken in order to accurately document, and therefore be able to comment on, what occurred when interpretations and conclusions of the research were fed back to participants, as this is not commonly reported in the literature. A topic guide was designed (Appendix 12) which collected feedback from participants about what worked well, what could have been different, if and how the research had benefitted them, and what they would have liked to see happen next. The recordings were transcribed and analysed for this thesis, observational comments and brief extracts will be provided in the results chapter.

4.3.3 Materials

Participants were provided with a summary of the research findings, which included the diagram of the themes generated and a summary of the key points for the core theme and each of the main themes. Each theme was presented alongside at least one image, with the salient images that were included in the results chapter of the thesis being included. Additional photos were selected to accompany a theme when these had connected with a theme as a salient photo had not emerged through the analysis. Not all participants had their images included in the feedback document, which enabled exploration of what it was like to not see any of their photographs featured. This was due to the consent process for including other people in photographs and the images including people in them who had not signed consent forms in relation to being in the photographs.

4.4 Quality

Rigour in qualitative research refers to the practice of researchers demonstrating the quality of their research and how it adheres to available guidelines which act as a quality check (Meyrick, 2006). Elliott, et al. (1999) draws on previous discussions of quality and rigour in qualitative research to provide seven guidelines to evaluate the credibility and rigour of qualitative research, to ensure that research produced was of a good quality. Yardley (2000) and Meyrick suggest transparency in the approach to research and quality checking underpins good quality research. Rigour and research quality was considered throughout the research process and will be evaluated in the discussion.

When considering the quality and rigour of the research, this feedback stage also acted as a credibility check (Elliott, at al., 1999) through returning to the participants and seeking their views on the findings at a group level. There is some tension in the literature in relation to feeding back to participants and the use of member checks which are then included in the write up of research. It is suggested that this places the view of participants at the centre of research rather than the researcher's interpretation (Meyrick, 2006). Participant centrality, however, was

the intent of this research and so was a lesser concern, with the research attempting to provide a participatory experience as well as to produce good quality research. It was the view of the research that it was possible to seek the views of participants and to consider how these impacted on an interpretation, without this leading to the researcher's interpretation becoming valueless or irrelevant.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

This chapter presents the outcomes of the IPA of the interviews with the six participants. The chapter will begin with details of the participants in the form of pen portraits, using their agreed pseudonyms, with Table 1 providing selected demographic information about the participants. Before then relating the experiences of the participants to five main themes under the umbrella of an over-arching core theme. The results will then conclude with an evaluation of how phase three (feedback) of the research process had impacted on the young people.

Table 1.
Participants' demographic and contextual information.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Siblings in placement	Contact with birth family
At	15	Male	no sibling	No
Junior	15	Male	No	Yes
Melissa	15	Female	Yes	Yes
Mr Popper	13	Female	Yes	Yes
No Pseudonym	15	Male	no sibling	Yes
Tyreasha	13	Female	Yes	No

5.1 Participant Pen Portraits

Pen portraits have been described as a way of integrating participants into the presentation of qualitative research, to ensure participants are represented more centrally (King & Horrocks, 2010). The pen portraits were based largely upon information given by the young people at the end of the research interview in response to a set of questions aimed to contextualise the data from each participant (Appendix 13). The pen portraits will also incorporate a reflexive account of the research interactions. This is presented with the aim of being transparent about the researcher's knowledge of the young people, as well as more holistically including the young people and their context in the research.

5.1.1 Melissa

Melissa was 15 at the time of participating in the research. She became looked-after when she was 12 years old and had lived in two foster placements since being in care. She had been in her current place for a year and a half at the time of the research interview. At the time of interview, Melissa lived with her brother in the foster placement, with her foster mother and their dog. She had formerly lived with her sister whilst they were at home with their birth mother, but her sister had been adopted and so did not live with Melissa. Melissa had contact with her birth mum "every few months", including around Christmas and her birthday. Melissa

had attended two schools, one primary school and remained in the same secondary school when she moved into foster care. Melissa was a member of the local authority participation group for looked-after young people and also participated in delivering training to professionals around disability, as she had a mild learning disability. Through conversations with her social worker, it was agreed Melissa met the inclusion criteria for the research and she could understand and complete the research task with the level of support available to participants.

Melissa took 13 photographs, and chose five to talk about during the research interview. Some of the images that Melissa chose not to talk about in the interview were repetitions of other images, whilst some were different to the images spoken about. The interview lasted for 72 minutes and Melissa was able to speak in detail about each photo, speaking quickly and offering lots of detail and information in her responses. Four of Melissa's five photographs were of her siblings, with siblings and family being central to the whole interview. Much of what Melissa spoke about was grounded in the photographs and what was contained within them, with Melissa choosing to take her photographs for their contents rather than to be used symbolically or to represent something for her. Melissa also spoke about wanting to take 'good' photos that were of special moments in her life, for instance her brother's birthday. This appeared to be related to her understanding of the societal norms around taking photographs. Melissa took photographs of: a photo of a photo of her birth sister; her brother and his friend as superheroes; her dog; her brother on his birthday; and her brother opening a present.

5.1.2 No Pseudonym

No Pseudonym was 15 at the time of participation, and had been in foster care since he was nine or ten years old. He was in his sixth placement, where he had been for just over one year. No Pseudonym reported that he had regular contact with his birth mother, with weekly phone contact and "sometimes monthly" face-to-face contact. No Pseudonym chose not to share why his contact was not always monthly. No Pseudonym had attended one primary and one secondary school, remaining at the same school when he became looked-after. He had no siblings and lived in his placement with his foster parents and their adult daughter. He had pets in his placement, including a dog. No Pseudonym was part of the participation group for looked-after young people and was experienced in participation and consultation activities.

No Pseudonym brought five images to the interview, and at the beginning of the interview retrieved his life story book and then took the final image which he spoke about. During the interview he also used the actual life story book as a point of reference to discuss this image. No Pseudonym described that he thought that his approach to the task had not been very good. He stated that he had left taking the photographs until just prior to the interview as he had forgotten about the task. This was also described as the way he prefers to work, however, he did not think this was a very good approach to take as he had not been able to photograph

everything he had wished to, such as school. The interview lasted for 50 minutes. No Pseudonym spoke openly and at length about each photo. His interview was linked closely with the contents of the images, moving between talking about concrete representations in the images but also symbolic and representational aspects of the photographs. He appeared to have considered some of what he would say in relation to each image in advance. No Pseudonym took photographs of: earphones; a shoe; t-shirts; Netflix; a Ted Baker deodorant can; and his life story book.

5.1.3 Tyreasha

At the time of participating Tyreasha was 13 years old, and had became looked-after when she was nine. Tyreasha lived in her current placement with her birth sister and her foster mum and foster dad, and their four cats and two dogs. Tyreasha also described her family as including her foster parents' three daughters and their children, two nephews and a niece. Tyreasha had lived in five placements, two were emergency placements and three were "proper" placements. Tyreasha had attended four schools including her current secondary school. Tyreasha did not have contact with her birth parents; she used to see her other younger sister but she was adopted when she was two years old. Tyreasha had not met her older siblings.

Tyreasha brought 28 photos to the interview but reduced them down to six that she wanted to talk about. Some of the discarded photos were repetitions whilst others were different but Tyreasha decided not to speak about these. These included photographs which Tyreasha said her foster carer had taken but she had not asked for; we identified these and deleted them as they were not chosen and taken by Tyreasha. The research interview lasted for 62 minutes. Tyreasha spoke in detail about each image, appearing to use the images to springboard from and to talk about a range of subjects, rather than talking solely about the content of the image. Tyreasha also used aspects of the images to represent something for her, for instance she took a photo of herself in school uniform and used this to represent her walk to and from school. Tyreasha appeared to have thought in advance about some of what she wanted to say in relation to each image, whilst also elaborating further in the interview. Tyreasha became distressed during the interview when talking about her past experiences; however she chose to continue with the interview and appeared to be comfortable talking afterwards. Tyreasha took photographs of: her (foster) nephews; her cat; a photo of a photo of a baby; her foster dad; herself in school uniform; and her bathroom.

5.1.4 Junior

Junior was 15 when he took part in the research, and had been looked-after since he was eight years old. His current placement was his second since entering care and he had been there for six years; he was initially in a short term placement. Junior had no contact with his birth

parents. Junior had one older brother, who was at university. Junior did not get to see him often, maybe a couple of times a year, due to the distance between their locations. Junior and his brother have contact via social media. Junior has attended one primary school and one secondary school, remaining at the same school when he came into care. Junior lives with his foster mum, and their two dogs, two tarantulas and a snake. The relationship between his foster parents had recently ended. Junior had contact with his foster dad, and also had a foster sister whom lives with him when she is home but was mostly away from home at university. Junior moved house during the research process. I was informed by his foster carer this was due to their being aggression and domestic violence within their next door neighbours' relationship which was distressing to Junior as he could hear it through the walls.

Junior was eager to take part in the research, however he was hard to meet with for the research, as he had many after-school commitments which meant he had one night per week free and other commitments were regularly slotted in to this time. Junior was a member of three rugby teams, from varying leagues, and trained six days a week.

Junior took seven pictures, and spoke about five. He believed that he had covered all that he wanted to at the end of talking about the fifth photograph, so we stopped the interview which was 64 minutes long. Junior was critical of his photographs and stated he believed he should have taken more and that he could have taken better photographs. Junior used the images as the basis to talk about a range of topics and did not focus on the contents of the images in detail. Junior struggled with the interview to begin with, he appeared to have taken his pictures in response to the photography task question but initially struggled to respond to the questions of the interview. Junior required greater prompting and some other questions to provide a 'warm up' to the interview. Following this, his use of the images appeared to be a springboard through which he then went on to talk about topics which were not related to or embedded in the image content. Junior took photographs of: his school badge; his pet snake; the badge of his rugby team; his Xbox; and his dog.

5.1.5 Mr Popper

Mr Popper was 13 years old when she participated in the research. She became looked-after when she was eight, and had been in two placements. Mr Popper had been with her current foster family for five years and lived there with her younger birth brother and sister, her foster parents, foster sister, and a dog. Mr Popper had contact with her birth mum and dad once every two months, with her aunt and her girlfriend every four months, and with her grandmother "less often". If she had contact with her grandmother it was during the contact with her parents. Mr Popper described that she had been to "a lot of primary schools because of bullying" and could remember two of these, one which she moved to whilst in this foster placement and one she went to whilst at home and remained in when she entered care. Mr Popper had attended a single

secondary school. Mr Popper stated she had experienced "a couple of house moves", including a recent move with her foster family to a temporary house.

Mr Popper took 15 photographs and chose to speak about five during the research interview, discarding some photographs which were different from the ones she spoke about. The interview with Mr Popper was 74 minutes long and was challenging at times as she was very quiet and her answers were brief. There were lots of protracted silent sections of the interview, to allow Mr Popper space to answer the questions. Mr Popper became distressed during the interview but chose to continue with the interview. She found and used a sloth stuffed animal during the interview, which she spoke about for part of the interview as part of a discussion about animals. All of Mr Popper's photographs were of living beings, and this led to the interview largely focusing on relationships and her social network. Mr Popper took photograph of: her birth family; her school friends; her aunt and her girlfriend; her foster family; and her dog.

During the first meeting with Mr Popper her home was busy and it was difficult to find a quiet space away from others to talk about the research. There were lots of people coming and going throughout the discussion, and her younger sister regularly entered the room to talk with Mr Popper and her social worker. Mr Popper shared a room with her sister, at the time of the interview she had temporarily moved with her foster family so that their home could be extended, with the plan being for her to have her own bedroom when they return to their usual house.

5.1.6 At

At was 15 when participating in the research. He was seven years old when he came into care and he had lived in two foster placements. At had been in his current placement for nine months at the time of the interview, the least amount of time of all the participants. He did not have any contact with his birth family, and his foster carer informed the researcher that he did not want this to change as he feared he would be made to go back to his birth family. At had attended two schools, staying at the same primary school when he became looked-after and remaining in his secondary school when he moved placements. At had no birth siblings. He lived in his current placement with two other young people in foster care, with his foster mum and dad, and their adult children.

At took nine photos and selected five to talk about during the research interview. He spoke about taking a few repetitions of photographs, as he could not tell how good they would be when they were on the camera. When At was provided with the task instructions he quickly asked if he could take a photo of a photo as part of the research, with his fifth photo at the interview being this image.

At was challenging to interview, he spoke very briefly about each photograph and did not elaborate in response to the questions. His interview was the shortest at 38 minutes. At stated he found the interview hard due to their being lots of questions about each of the images, and he appeared to struggle to respond to the questions about each image. Prior to reaching the final image, which was a photo of a photograph of some of his birth family, At asked to stop the interview as he did not want to talk about the final image. This seemed to be the image that At had quickly asked if he could take during our meeting when the photography task instructions were given, however he did not want to talk about it anymore. As it was the first idea At immediately had, it may be that this was the most important image to At, or an image that was very personal to him compared to the other images. At appeared to have taken images of important things in his life whilst also focusing on taking aesthetically 'good' photos, for instance thinking about position and composition of the 'Bird at Brid' photo. At took photographs of: his foster dad's sports car; another young person in the placement; a bird at Brid; his foster carers and a photo of photograph of birth family members (not spoken about).

5.2 Results of the IPA Analysis

5.2.1 Overview and Diagram of Themes

A single core theme of 'Place and Possibility: Finding a way' was generated. There were five main themes that emerged which resided within 'Place and Possibility', the core theme. A diagram of themes from the IPA are presented in Figure 2, the contribution of each participant to each theme is provided in Table 2.

Figure 2. Diagram of the core theme and main themes from the IPA.

Table 2
Contribution by each participant to themes.

THEME	Melissa	No Pseudonym	Tyreasha	Junior	Mr Popper	At
(In)visibility and Being (un)seen, (un)heard, and (mis)understood	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Being a part of the place and being with others	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Getting away and finding space	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The importance of animals as a second soul	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Getting to know myself	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

As Table 2 demonstrates, the themes generated were able to incorporate the experiences of participants; three of the themes being based upon contributions by all participants, with two themes being based upon the data of five out of six participants. Four participants' data were therefore part of all of the themes, whilst the other two participants contributed to four out of five themes. When considering the importance of animals, No Pseudonym did have pets within his foster home but these were not spoken about as important to him, so this omission was not due to lack of opportunity.

5.2.2 Core Theme: Place and Possibility: Finding a way.

The experience of being looked-after during adolescence was described by participants in a situated way, that is, when describing what was important to them, they talked about the place they were in and the possibilities that were made available to them due to occupying those places. Place referred to the placement they were in, and the associated immediate and wider context that the participants moved to when they moved placement. Participants spoke about the importance of their current place and the ways they had developed as a result of being in their current place and with the people who they are with. Tyreasha discussed her experience of care, support, and connection in her place. The experiences Tyreasha had through her place were carried with her into other aspects of her life, and assisted her to cope with the world, made her more able to find a way to cope, and to do the things that matter to her. The people and animals in her life became a part of who she was, her 'second soul', as she described here:

Tyreasha: It's like you have real friends and it's like, it's like you've got a second soul like I said about the cat you have erm, you only have one soul but truly you have many souls because you've got your friends, your family, your animals, everything in your life is part of your soul (641-645).

The impact of the place and possibilities described by Tyreasha was similar to other participants; participants described an approach to their context and place which was about them finding a way to manage and maintain what was important to them. Participants, for instance, described attempting to cope with the remnants of any difficult experiences they had had in their past within their present place and possibility. As well as the impact their current place had on them due to the people and possibilities which became present in their life, such as for Tyreasha above, participants described finding a way to have a relationship with those who were distant or absent in their current place. It seemed that their internal world and the thoughts and emotions they experience both impacted on, and were moderated by, their external place. Participants described finding a way to manage in their place, with this being an interaction between themselves and the demands of the place which they resided. The techniques that participants found to manage these internal processes, however, were dependant on the possibilities available to them, for instance access to their own space, being a part of a foster family with whom they had developed a trusting and caring relationship, and through access to animals. Place therefore referred to the participant's experience of their internal context, as described by Melissa below when discussing her dog.

Melissa: Yeah 'cos if I didn't have the connection with her I don't know where I'll be. I'd be lost in my mind (673-674).

Participants expressed that they were themselves due to the place and possibilities within it, comparing their experiences with those prior to occupying their current place. They used the possibilities and experiences which they could currently access to discover and understand themselves, and to begin to think about what was important to them so that they could (from their perspective) become this in the future. This led to participants describing an experience of who they were as connected closely with where they were and who they were with. Junior said he felt aware of the ways the opportunities and successes he had achieved were connected his current place. When discussing, Junior stated:

Junior: Don't know, I just, I just like so many things have happened and then I just came to – came into this family and yeah, I just changed. And like better things for myself, so far. And important thing is I'm happy as well so…yeah. (584-586).

Coming to his current place had provided Junior with possibilities, and based upon these he had found a way to navigate through his life. When considering place and possibility, similarly to Junior, other participants described their experience of being a part of the family and wider social context in their place, and their experience of being in a *"good place"* (At, line 557). Their experiences were embedded within the system which they were placed, including family and other social groups, such as school and friends. This was salient to participants due

to their life story involving experiences in other places. Their former places provided participants with points of comparison and led to participants feeling aware of the impact of their current place. These relationships were important to participants, with the impact of an experience of care and connection with others in their place, including animals, being described. Tyreasha, in the following extract, spoke about the multiple relationships in her life at the time of the research.

> Tyreasha: Yeah erm because of erm because like I said if I'd never moved to this foster placement I'd never have moved to this school and I would never have met such an amazing family and like what they are capable of (146-149).

Tyreasha's use of "never" emphasised her belief that had she not been where she was, her life may not have been the same. She attributed the change she has experienced to her context, specifically the care and connection she has with her foster carers, as they had allowed her to become who she was due to 'what they are capable of'. Place and possibility represented the experiences and relationships which were presented together and made available when a young person moved to their new placement. These new discoveries and relationships were located in their place and if they were to have gone elsewhere or were to now move these were described as being possibly left behind. Place and Possibility was therefore about relationships and discoveries, whilst also being greater than this and a part of all the themes that emerged through the IPA and so will be returned to throughout the results section. These themes were important and interrelated as ways that participants moderated the interaction between their external and internal experiences to find a way to cope and develop within their place. Each of the five themes will now be individually outlined, with the results also drawing together linkage between themes which became apparent. The participants appeared to be finding a way to both manage their current life and experiences, as well as progress toward a wanted future.

5.2.3 Theme 1: Getting away and finding space: Maintaining balance and feeling safe amidst life's noise.

As participants discussed what was important to them, descriptions were included of times where their context became overwhelming and so they sought space, finding a way to have quiet away from the noise of life. Participants described coping with their lives through escaping to a space, both internal and external, to manage their emotional experience of life. For some there was a dislike or fear of noise and loudness, whilst for others confrontation and heightened emotion around them was unwanted. Getting away was therefore greater than a want to be alone and represented an attempt to escape an environment that was becoming aversive to them. When these situations began or were perceived to be imminent the young people spoke about retreating to a space, such as their bedroom or the bathroom, where they could ensure there would be quiet and they would be away from that which was being avoided. At for instance described *"I don't like people shouting but if, if that happens I just go away and*

just go up to my bedroom or something" (line 168-169). Mr Popper in the following extract described leaving the environment when her foster mum shouted at her siblings.

> Mr Popper: Er... I don't know cause like if – if them two have done something wrong and like [foster mum] is shouting, and it sometimes like upsets me so I just come upstairs out of way. Just in bed, just sat on bed reading a book or something (547-549).

Witnessing others being angry and getting into trouble caused Mr Popper to become distressed. She was unable to remain in this environment, so coped with her reaction to the situation by escaping upstairs. Other participants described creating this boundary between the unwanted environment and noise, seeking out space which led to feelings of safety through separation. Participants described wanting a *"nice and peaceful"* (At, 168), quiet environment, in which events and stimulation were controlled by them. Tyreasha, in the following extract, described her use of space to moderate her interaction with the younger children in her place who were *"always like bouncing off the walls"* (line 191).

> Tyreasha: Sometimes I can just lock myself in my room when they come because like sometimes they're really noisy but when they calm down I just like come, come out my, come out my shell like a little turtle as you say (175-178).

Through closing her door, Tyreasha was able to create a separate psychosocial space within her room. Going to her own space allowed her to feel protected and safe, with the room acting as a shell that protects her from what she dislikes outside and keeps her safe inside. The quiet and controlled environment did not contain the aspects of the environment from which the young people were attempting to escape, and so they could regulate their emotions and lower their distress. When living in a foster placement, the young people lived alongside others, and so the need for space was based on the match between the system and its' approach with their preferences. For some participants there was a description of an acceptable match; for instance At stated that he does not mind living with all the people in his home as they *"don't shout all about with each other"* (line 203). Tyreasha, however, described her need for space due to the demands of the place in which she resided, which involved her bedroom or the bathroom.

> Tyreasha: It's literally the only place where I can take my anger out or just be free from the hell house as I call it when everyone's here because it's always noisy and yeah everyone either ends up getting a headache or getting upset (890-894).
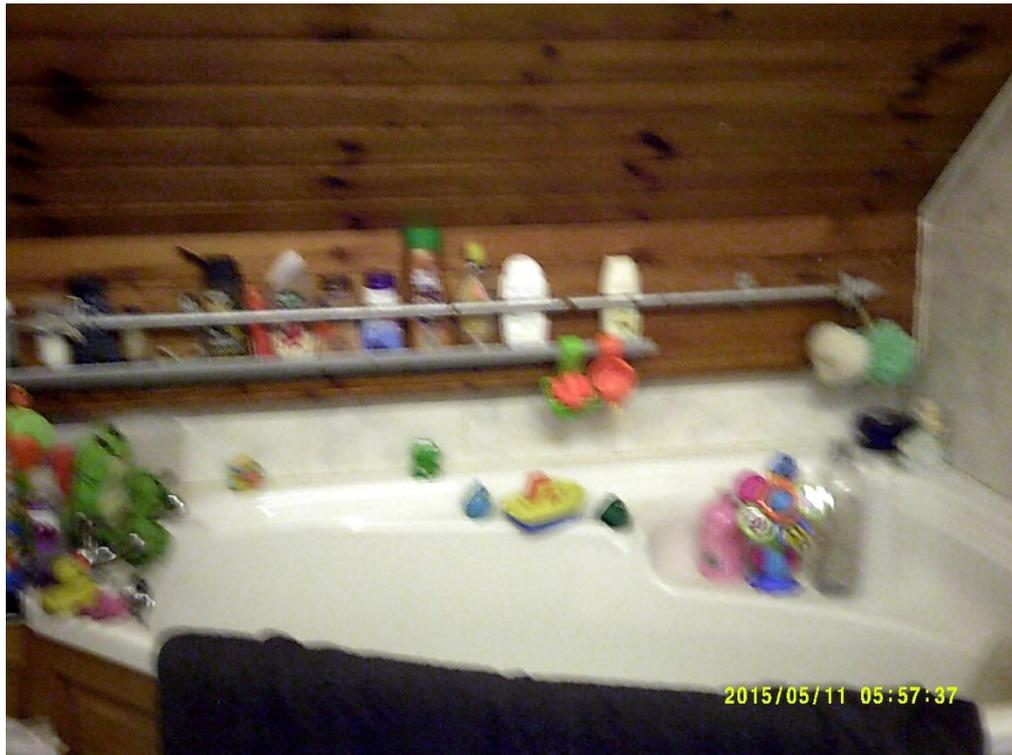
Figure 3. A photograph of the bathroom by Tyreasha.

Reflexive Box 5: Incorporating the visual into the interpretative process

Tyreasha used an image of her bathroom to communicate her want for space and getting away. This image connected with my experience of the bathroom as a private space, and the process of taking a bath which I envisaged as a self-care activity whilst also generating a perception of a sanctuary. Due to the salience of the image, it assisted me to deepen my understanding about the participants' pursuit of a separate, peaceful space in which they could moderate and cope with the place and psychosocial context in which they live. The use of the visual also contributed an understanding of the act of seeking separate space as purposeful, much like the process and purposefulness of running and having a bath. Participants recognised a need to get away, go to a separate space, block out the external world, create their sanctuary, moderate and cope, and then when ready returned to the outside world.

Tyreasha's experience of her place involved few places being described as areas in which she could be open with her emotions and not feel overwhelmed by the external environment. This room represented a space which was hers and was under her control, and in which she had found a way to cope within her place. Other participants also described finding a way to undertake this process based upon the place and the possibilities available to them for physical space and escape, or a lack of. The way the system in which the young person was

placed operates also impacts on the possibility and amount of psychosocial space they afford the young person, with a lack of space leading to frustration for the young person. Whilst being cared for and being thought about was important to participants, Mr Popper spoke about, in the forthcoming extract, how this was balanced by a need for independence and space to do as she wanted.

> Mr Popper: It did get annoying because like I'd be doing something and then they'd come up checking if I were alright and then they'd go back down, then I'd carry on with what I were doing and then they'd come back up again, so it got annoying, really annoying but it were alright because I knew they were only checking, like checking on me, making sure I were safe (376-381).

Whilst this extract communicated about her experience of care and a difficulty accepting care versus this being okay, it was the discussion about the lack of space which was salient. When her space was invaded and so the task she was undertaking was interrupted, this led to further unwanted emotions, such as annoyance and frustration. It also undermined the ability of Mr Popper to use space as a coping mechanism. This was an example of the availability of such space being constrained by the place in which participants live, with not all participants having a space in which they have control. Other participants also discussed environments which prevented them being able to physically get away to a quieter space. This included transient situations, such as being on the bus, and also contexts in which there was a continuing lack of own space, for instance due to having a shared bedroom at home. No Pseudonym took a photograph of his earphones and, in the following extract, spoke about the importance of this object for this process.

> No Pseudonym: My earphones are erm quite important to me I use them on a daily basis erm I use them quite a lot erm and you know just listen to music or go on YouTube or anything like that and yeah it just blocks out everything else so and yeah and it makes, it makes me feel better knowing I have them and when I don't have them I just stress a lot but when it, when I do have them it just makes me feel better and yeah (41-48).

No Pseudonym used his earphones to block out the external world when getting away was not possible. This object assisted him to cope with the demands of his external environment, with their availability and accessibility providing reassurance that he would be able to manage difficult situations. No Pseudonym used this object to escape the external world, whilst remaining physically within it, as a way of coping with the difficult environment and therefore moderating his emotional reaction. For Mr Popper, a similar process was described, in which she used reading to *"zone out of anything"* (line 576) as a way of blocking out the external environment. When No Pseudonym did not have his earphones this made him feel worse, which may be due to this forcing him to remain within an aversive external situation.

Figure 4. Photo of earphones by No Pseudonym.

Reflexive Box 6: Incorporating the visual into the interpretative process

The image of the earphones was an important one for No Pseudonym, and one which resonated with myself when attempting to interpret the data. The earphones represented not only a psychological barrier but also form a physical barrier between the internal and external world, with the image that accompanied this extract forming a visual gem which assisted my understanding of this. The image of the white earphones against a dark background also led to an increased appreciation of the importance that this object had for him, as a reassuring solution that helped him cope when life was becoming overwhelming; the light amongst the dark.

Another dimension to the participants' use of space was as a way of coping with the demands of everyday life, including their education and recreational commitments. This represented a use of space which extended beyond getting away from aversive situations and coping through retreating to safety. Participants described an experience of life in which there were high expectations on themselves, both from others and a personal want to achieve. A consequence of these expectations was described as a demanding and stressful life. Participants coped with this through the use of a low stress and self-controlled environment away from their commitments. Tyreasha stated *"I've had a stressful day at school I can just literally relax and read in the bath and it's practically the only sane time I have"* (line 804-805). Junior, below, described a want to escape to play the Xbox.

    Junior: Yeah cause like having homework and that from school every day, it gets like annoying and stuff and you just want to like get time away from it. So like I do my homework and that from school, and get that out of the way and then I spend like a couple of hours on Xbox. Like when I get free, like days off rugby as well. It's good to just go on it (354-358).

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Junior used space to create a balance with the more demanding activities of his life as well as a way to escape to safety from a feared or disliked immediate environment. The tasks of his everyday life built up and became 'annoying', at which point space away from these was sought. Within this space, the activity was undertaken for enjoyment and relaxation, without an expectation to achieve, perform, or be a certain way.

In addition to finding a way to moderate the impact of their external context, the use of space was described as a way participants coped with and managed a complex internal world. Participants discussed getting away to a quiet and private space to manage and process their emotions and handle stress. This included stress due to events in their current place, as well as coping with the experience of being looked-after and the past which led to them being in that position. For some, a preference for keeping their emotions and what was going on for them private and internal was expressed, with space being used to process and manage emotions and thoughts away from others and the demands of the social world. Melissa, in the following extract describes the use of a private space at school when she was distressed.

Melissa: When I'm at school I normally go to the teachers and put my hand up and just say can I just go to the toilets, just for a bit, yeah sure and I would go to the toilets and I'd just cry a little bit and then I come out of the toilets and just go into the classroom and teacher's like are you OK? Yeah, yeah fine 'cos I cried a little bit (299-304).

Within school Melissa felt there were options, and the accessibility of space away from the classroom enabled Melissa to keep distressing experiences, and the associated expressions of emotion such as crying, private,. This process depends on Melissa being able to recognise and moderate her own emotions sufficiently well so that they are contained until she is within the separate space. For Melissa having this opportunity was positive and involves her *"like getting it all out crying and I'm thinking that makes me a lot happier"* (line 307-308). Following brief emotional expression, Melissa's distress was alleviated and she was able to return to engaging with the demands placed upon her. For other participants, exiting physically was not possible, but through the use of objects they were able to moderate their interaction with the external world, and find an internal space to process their experiences privately. No Pseudonym, again, spoke about the use of his earphones in relation to this.

No Pseudonym: It, it's good because when you want to have them thoughts and when you want to keep them inside and do you know when you want to think to yourself and none else then yeah (59-62).

His earphones provided space and the separation which kept what was internal inside his head rather than it being shared and known by others. It provided him with an opportunity to manage and process these thoughts, and escape the expectations, such as interaction with others, which may be present in his environment. Getting away and creating space was also used by No Pseudonym to create a balance between time spent interacting within his internal and external

worlds. In the following extract, No Pseudonym continued to talk about his earphones and the function they possessed in managing his experiences and life

> No Pseudonym: It's well yeah I mean it's like if you've got other people or things that you're thinking about and then you were to have earphones in yourself like blocking out them you know whatever bad thoughts or whatever and then just thinking and then just thinking about the music and nothing else (75-79).

No Pseudonym used his earphones and music as a way of escaping and distracting himself to get away from his internal world, and difficult thoughts and feelings. This represents a balance with his use of the same object to get away and create psychosocial space from the external world to concentrate and be within his internal processes. For No Pseudonym the process of getting away and having space was used to assist him to walk a tightrope between unwanted experiences within his internal and external world, whilst blocking out either and both in an attempt to not be overwhelmed by the demands of one or the other. This represented the use of internal and external space by participants to maintain a balance and prevent others being a part of or aware of these processes. A reason for getting away to a separate, internal or external, space to manage their emotions, appeared to be an attempt to protect others from an unwanted impact of their thoughts, feelings, and responses. Tyreasha, for instance stated she went to her bedroom and read instead of *"taking my anger out on a person I'm taking it out on a book"* (line 829-830). Junior, in the extract below, described the use of space as a way of reducing confrontation in his environment.

> Junior: Don't know, if you like – like fell out with someone or something you can just go in your bedroom and just like go on it. Like normally when I fall out with my mum, like people in house I just go upstairs in my bedroom and then go on that. Yes it gets you away from making the situation worse, so I guess that's good thing about it (387-390).

Junior used a separate space as a way of reducing confrontation when there was conflict or heightened emotion in their environment due to an awareness of the possible negative consequences and harm if the conflict continues or his emotion was expressed verbally or behaviourally. Rather than *"making the situation worse"* he retreated, and used the space to emotionally moderate. When considering the theme of '(In)visibility and being (un)seen, (un)heard, and (mis)understood', it appeared getting away and an avoidance of being emotional in front of others acted as a form of image management. Participants attempted to appear a certain way in order to protect themselves. The participants' fear being that if they did not present themselves in an acceptable way that they will be disliked and, at worst, unwanted. This preference to keep emotions and processes private, and to avoid the consequences of emotional expressions, may have functioned to allow some participants to present themselves in the most acceptable way. The conditionality in which the young people perceived they reside, and the need to protect themselves through not causing distress or harm to others, may have created a need for a space in which emotional expression was acceptable. Participants therefore retreated

to a safe space in which to process and express their emotions due to a fear of bad things that could occur if there emotion was to be expressed in a shared space. Such spaces were described as being regularly accessed, for instance when Tyreasha stated *"I'm taking it out on my teddy bear which is quite fun. But it's had a lot of wear and tear my teddy"* (line 833-834). This suggested that participants frequently experienced a range of emotional experiences which they endeavoured to keep hidden and private from those around them, and to process in a personal psychosocial space.

When thinking about how they spent their time, balance was discussed as being of importance to participants. Participants discussed wanting to be a part of the home and the environment, but also the importance of being able to get away and find space when the environment became overwhelming or unwanted. When participants sought space and to get away, this formed a temporary solution to the situation with a want to re-integrate as soon as the environment became tolerable again. This represented an attempt by participants to moderate and control their interactions with their environment, so to maintain their preferred internal state. Mr Popper's dislike for loud noises but wanting a balance so it was not too quiet was discussed earlier within the 'being a part of the place and being with others' theme. In the following extract, Tyreasha described her experiences in her place in relation to the amount of activity and noise that she would like.

> Tyreasha: I'd rather not get away from the noise because like I have fun when, when it's noisy. I know it sounds weird but I have fun and it yeah erm it doesn't matter if it's noisy or quiet it just, it just, I think quiet just helps me erm think about things like if I'm doing my homework my erm I literally either put myself in my room and do my homework or lock myself, put myself in the kitchen and do it because it's practically the only quiet places in the house (821-827).

Tyreasha recognised when her environment was becoming overwhelming for her and used this self-awareness about what she needed and could manage to create a balance with what she would like, in order to be able to do the things that matter to her. Other participants also described levels and types of noise which were never bearable and so they retreated prior to their commencement, such as disagreement, shouting, and arguing. Mr Popper, in the extract below, described the fighting between her dog and his brother when they were together.

> Mr Popper: I leave the room cause like usually when they're – when his brother is here I'm not usually in the same room as them when they're together because like they're always fighting (849-851).

For Mr Popper, as the two dogs together were too noisy and aggressive for her, she escaped prior to the situation arising in order to protect herself from the unwanted feelings that their noisy fighting caused in her. The anticipation and fear of what this may lead her to feel like, based on past experience, was enough for Mr Popper to leave and find the space she required to feel safe and separate.

5.2.3.1 Conclusion

Space appeared important to participants as it enabled them to manage and moderate their emotions away from the demands of their place. This provided safety from an averse environment, but also the judgement of others which allowed participants to control what was seen and known about them to others. When space was unavailable, some participants spoke about the ways they had found to create internal space, with their interaction between their internal and external experiences being finely balanced so as not to be overwhelmed by their presence in either. It appeared that participants viewed some of their experiences as needing to be dealt with separately as they felt aware of the negative impact it could have on them or others if it were to be seen. This suggested that participants believed that only some of their experiences and who they were was acceptable to others.

5.2.4 Theme 2 – (In)visibility and Being (un)seen, (un)heard, and (mis)understood: Themselves on show

Participants felt it was important to them that they were seen, heard, and understood by those around them. Being seen and heard appeared to enable them to cope better with current and past events. Participants contrasted this with times when they have felt unheard and the impact this has had on their view of themselves, and their ability to show a version of themselves to others which they wish to be seen. Visibility and being seen was a complex experience for participants, however, as many felt aspects of themselves and their life history were more visible to others, even when participants wished to keep these private or hidden. Participants wished to show a certain version of themselves, and to control the visibility of the more private aspects of themselves; when there was unwanted visibility this was felt to compromise the attempts of participants' to manage their image and to show themselves in a way they believed would be accepted and liked. No Pseudonym discussed his preference to keep his life story and life story book private in the following extract.

> No Pseudonym: Because you don't want people knowing who you are, what you've done, because it's not the past you judge them for it's the future. That's about it (743-745).

The choice of who knew what about him was important to No Pseudonym, as he felt aware of the possible judgement of others in his place, and the impact that this may have on him. His use of the term *"who you are"* may have reflected that this version of himself was experienced as the true person he is, but it appeared he wanted to move away from this to become more accepted and less judged in the future.

Being unheard and unseen was expressed as an experience of feeling unimportant, and powerless to change things. Participants spoke about the power of others to silence them and limit them from talking about what is important to them. Participants also shared examples of others inviting their contribution and it was felt that other people in the participants' lives can

provide an opportunity to be heard. Participants, therefore, described that they required others around them to facilitate their involvement, as if their involvement required invitation. Melissa, in the next extract, spoke about an experience of being unheard, following a part in the interview where she was reflecting on how others view her.

Melissa:	It's nice that people think about saying she's helpful and everything and I feel, I feel like someone that I'm there, I'm in a family and in the conversation.
Interviewer:	Mmhhmm
Melissa:	That's when I don't get upset err and the erm when people say that if I'm not in there I just stay away in the corner I feel like I'm put away in the corner and they haven't talked to me. I feel just put away in the corner erm and not speak or anything and told not to speak, told not to move, told not to do anything erm that's what I feel sometimes. But on the other hand like if people do bring me in the conversations I feel happy about that (266-277).

Melissa described feeling *"put away in a corner"* which communicated an image of an ignored, neglected and segregated young person. Her description of not moving or speaking provided an example of her feeling that she was asked to be invisible, and of no burden or significance, rather than being a person with needs, an opinion, or worth being noticed. Melissa felt she had to be brought into the family and the conversations within her place. For Melissa, rather than feeling entitled to be heard she seemed to feel she required permission to talk. In the following extract, No Pseudonym explained why it was important to him that he was noticed by others - this was an example of the benefits of being visible and others giving their attention to the version of himself that he wanted to be noticed. He contrasted this with times when he has felt unnoticed or that others have seen a version of himself which he thought he had moved on from.

No Pseudonym:	Feels nice that actually erm you know you can, you know be, you know when you're showing people what you're actually like and what you like to do and what you like to wear and that (240-242).

No Pseudonym described that *"showing"* what he was *"actually like"* led to a *"better feeling"* (line 246). When what he was "actually like" was not seen by others, No Pseudonym felt restricted in his ability to show change and progress from the critical way that he believed he was viewed by others with whom he interacted. Being seen and visible for No Pseudonym therefore depended on the interest and attention from others, this prospect, when considered alongside Melissa's narrative, appeared to be something that was granted and permitted rather than always available. Similar to Melissa and No Pseudonym, other participants described experiences of being heard and seen by others and becoming visible for who they were, particularly in terms of the effort they felt they were exerting in 'improving'. Being noticed led to feelings of themselves as existing and as being important. During the interviews, Melissa, No Pseudonym, Tyreasha and Junior described the effort they were putting into themselves and into striving and achieving; to progress towards a wanted scenario or goal, both internal and

external. The experience of being seen and noticed for these achievements and efforts was important in maintaining their motivation for continued progress. Much of Junior's interview was focused on his development in rugby and how this had impacted on him, and his life. In the following extract Junior was describing how he believed his rugby team would describe him.

> Junior: I don't know, they'd say I'm hardworking, like came from Division Three team then went to a higher division and stuff, played higher for a year and then got offered a – yeah they'd just say I'm hardworking and stuff. I've come a long way and I'm learning fast and things like that, so yeah, positive things (316-319).

Junior's description of himself was closely linked with the progress he had made in his interest, with this leading to a belief that effort and hard work leads to success. Junior felt he could influence the outcomes in his life and through his efforts can get a wanted result. Other participants, however, also described working hard and putting effort in but that this effort went unnoticed. Tyreasha, below, had just been speaking about how she tried as hard as possible to achieve, and that she had to put extra effort in to compensate for the lack of schooling in her past and thus falling behind.

> Tyreasha: Because some people don't realise how much effort I put in in maths. Even though I do draw a lot in maths erm I actually get loads of the work done, actually before I draw. Even if it is hard I do put some effort in (752-755).

Tyreasha described the version of herself which was focussed upon her being the self as distracted and avoiding work. Rather than seeing and understanding the effort she was exerting to overcome the difficulties she was experiencing, her struggle was seen and visible. This led to Tyreasha feeling misunderstood by those around her, as her effort was unappreciated and thus unrewarded. Tyreasha's effort in the present was an attempt to develop who she was and to move in the preferred direction, to overcome her difficulties and to improve in areas which she struggled. Other participants also demonstrated an attempt to move away from the events and remnants of the past. They felt that this was important in order to defy a deterministic narrative that their past continued to impact on their present. In an attempt to move on from their past, participants wished for others to focus on themselves as they currently were and for this to be seen and heard. Part of this process involved participants wanting to keep parts of them and their lives unseen and hidden, move forward from thinking about their past and to disguise their struggle. Tyreasha described, in the following extract, the questions asked by those around her when she first moved to her placement.

> Tyreasha: I had to explain to them that how, why we got left at school and they kept on ask, constantly asking questions so erm I had to keep on answering them and the questions got harder and harder to answer (72-76).

Tyreasha experienced these questions as others interrogating her about her life, and that she *"had to"* answer them, which undermined her ability to keep aspects of herself and her life private. There seemed to be a perceived expectation and pressure to be open, with those around

her not moderating their difficult and private questions. When participants joined a new place, for instance when starting at a new school and joining a new family, this was discussed by some participants as making their looked-after status and living in foster care more visible. This represented an example of the complexity participants experienced in being seen, heard, and understood, whilst controlling knowledge about aspects of their lives which they wanted to keep hidden to others, but had been reluctantly made seen and heard. For Tyreasha, the need to be open appeared to be in response to an understanding of her which was based upon stigma, assumption, and the social construct of the foster child and being looked-after. In the following extract Tyreasha described the stigma that became associated with her at her new school and impacted on what was seen and said about her by others.

> Tyreasha: Because when I moved to this school that I'm at now erm people, someone started a rumour going round that I came from a foster home, like a proper foster place like an orphanage so I had to explain to practically the whole year that I moved from my previous school because of bullying and also erm moving foster placements and I erm it was really hard because they wanted to know why I got into foster care and how I got into foster care and all this, all the inside details, it was just really, really hard so yeah (128-136).

Tyreasha's ability to control the information that was known to others and to have privacy was lost in the process of correcting the views held by others. This was exposing and difficult for Tyreasha but preferred to misunderstanding and misrepresentation by others. For Tyreasha, despite being embedded within this place and functioning in the present, her past experiences and the need to be in foster care became what was seen, with the person and present self and situation being unseen. This lack of choice and expectation to talk about the past was also described by No Pseudonym, who discussed having to cope with being open and talking about *"anything"* (line 652). Much of the participants' lives were described as being widely known, with it being described that their life was like an open book. No Pseudonym spoke, in the below extract, about his life and used an image of his open life story book to explain the visibility of his story, deliberating setting the book partially open.

> No Pseudonym: That your life's a basically, technically my life is a book. You know what I mean it's like, but I mean I've sort of like got my book open and that means that technically my life is open because I mean, I mean if you even go to social services or owt like that they know everything about you and you may not even know half the stuff so you know it's like an open book in a way and it just shows that I am happy to talk about anything in a way (646-652).

Figure 5. A photograph of my life story book by No Pseudonym.

No Pseudonym's description of *"everything"* being known by others included knowledge about part of his life and past which, whilst unknown to him, he believed the wider system possessed. His description of life as a book involved the ability for his story to be picked up, shared, and read by others. For No Pseudonym, and others, parts of their life story was known, owned and controlled by them, however parts of their life story remained uncontrolled by them but possibly seen and visible to others. No Pseudonym described being comfortable with talking about his life and living as an open book, however at other times in the interview he described wanting to move focus away from this known past toward a yet to be known future.

No Pseudonym: Because you don't want people knowing who you are, what you've done, because it's not the past you judge them for it's the future. That's about it. (743-745).

For No Pseudonym, a focus on the past was difficult, and others knowing his life story undermined his ability to show himself in the way he wished. This was an example, which was also present for others but particularly discussed by No Pseudonym, of the participants attempting to show a certain version of themselves as this was connected with being wanted and accepted by others. The efforts and processes that participants undertook in order to show the themselves in a certain way was closely linked with how they appeared, which for some participants was about smiling and appearing happy, whilst for No Pseudonym, below, it was related to his clothing and the impression that this gave to others about him.

No Pseudonym: But I mean if I'm walking in front of someone looking nice and smart then you know it's that, it makes that standing base of who you are, of what you're going to be like (226-228).

First impressions and making what was seen and visible to others acceptable was important, as No Pseudonym worried that without this others would judge him and reject him. For No Pseudonym, getting this outward self-presentation right was important as it came before getting to know the person underneath, and informed others about what he was like and if he was worth getting to know. Participants described being aware of the possible rejection of others, and for them this was related to being unwanted in the place which they reside. This was, again, particularly the case for No Pseudonym who described his fear that if he were to not appear 'want-able' that this could impact on his experience of his current place.

No Pseudonym: If I was to wind up on somebody's doorstep and look like a mess and erm look like I'm unhygienic or something like that, then they may, then they could say to me, they could say to me oh well you know it's disgusting and stuff like that and then you wouldn't want to live there, you'd be offended and yeah I mean I think make it, but depending on what you wear makes erm cutting judgement about you while they're still trying to get to know you (327-334).

It was important for him to have a 'want-able' version of himself seen at all times, due to the painful emotions and the possible loss associated with getting this wrong, as the shame and embarrassment of poor self-presentation was experienced as "*cutting*" by him. The view of himself as a mess and unhygienic communicated his view that he has the potential to introduce something bad or contaminated into his place.

Figure 6. A photograph of deodorant and clothes by No Pseudonym.

Reflexive Box 7: Incorporating the visual into the interpretative process

A number of No Pseudonyms images connected with this theme and were used by me as visual gems to interpret the data around visibility. The visual perspective on the image of the deodorant can was different from all the other images produced by No Pseudonym, making it appear larger and more central. The deodorant can standing proud in the middle of the image could be read as emphasising the strength and reassurance this object brought in allowing him to present himself well. This image led to my understanding of this external representation being as an armour, which the deodorant and clothes together form, and the external world interact with, to protect himself underneath. The visibility of the label represented to me the importance of this particular bottle being seen rather than just its utility, *"it's just like you know Ted Baker I like that stuff you know"* (line 578). The deodorant can therefore does not just symbolise a cover up or a protective layer, but represents a chosen cover. I reflected upon the centrality and size of the can as quite 'in your face' and how this forced me as the viewer to see what the young person wanted to be seen. This assisted me to better appreciate the importance of making what they wanted to be seen, seen. It also led to an understanding of the theme as having a 'seeing is believing' component, with the opportunity for this to be seen being important, *"nobody really sees the bottle, nobody sees it you know showing it makes, it's good"* (line 248-249). In society, something being shown and seen validates that it was real; by applying this practice to the data, the photographs that No Pseudonym used to show the concepts he wanted to discuss may also have been used so that he was believed. Finally, the deodorant can helped me better appreciate how No Pseudonym described himself as experienced by others, and the sensory nature of self-expression. The deodorant can was used to communicate a self beyond that which can be seen and heard. No Pseudonym talked about being unhygienic, his experiences of judgement and the disgust and rejection others have shown toward him. The deodorant can helped me to appreciate what he meant through reflecting upon what it might feel like to have seen someone express a repugnant expression in response to a disliked smell, and to appreciate the feelings of shame and embarrassment if that smell was me.

The clothes, as well as contributing to the idea of armour, were salient due to their simplicity. The range of clothes communicated the day-to-day need to present the self in a certain way, and the plain nature of the first t-shirt resonated with me. These clothes were described as being used to communicate a self through their sense of style, however the front t-shirt appeared unremarkable. Through returning to their interview alongside this t-shirt, this assisted me to appreciate the want to be acceptable and liked, rather than as style being a way of standing out and being unique. This image, therefore, assisted the

analysis to better engage with what No Pseudonym may be trying to say, rather than understanding self-expression and sense of style in a way which prioritised my understanding and interpretation of what this concept meant.

For No Pseudonym and other participants, this want to show a certain version of themselves was closely linked with emotional states. Participants described the version of themselves which they wanted others to see as happy, with other emotional states being described as less preferred and less liked. Melissa, in the following extract, described the importance of being happy, following discussing an image she liked due to it making her happy.

Melissa: It's important that I'm happy 'cos if I am not happy I wouldn't be talking erm and I would feel myself I would hate myself if I wasn't happy (857-858).

Melissa's experience of herself was related to her emotional context, with different emotions leading to her experiencing different versions of herself. Melissa, however, described when she was happy as *"me"* (line 881). The 'happy Melissa' was perceived by her as not only wanted, but as an authentic version of herself. This separation of herself into that which was 'me' and that which was not 'me' perhaps allowed Melissa to see herself as liked, with the parts of herself and her experience which were hated as not really her. Other participants had a similar understanding of themselves, which led to some participants having a fragile view of themselves, as it was dependant on maintaining a consistent outward presentation, which included only certain emotions being seen. In the following extract, No Pseudonym described the consequence of showing an unwanted version of himself and his fear that this would lead to a loss of who he was, due to the way he appeared *"defining my personality" (line 612).*

No Pseudonym: If one day I slacked what off who I really was then that would be it I'd lose it forever who I actually am. 'cos I mean you know everybody has a routine like but if you know you slack off that routine I think you sort of like lose a bit of who you are because you've broke the routine, in a way (619-623).

No Pseudonym's daily routine brought him reassurance that he would continue to present as the person that he wanted to be. If he did the same things, in the same order each day, nothing should change. This routine then led to the himself he wanted to show being visible and through showing the person he wanted to appear to be and this being seen, this became the person he was. The version of themselves which participants outwardly projected and wanted to be visible to others over time became used by participants to inwardly define who they were and who they saw themselves as. What was seen outwardly became who they felt they were inwardly.

As the perceived consequences of getting the presentation of themselves 'wrong' may be significant, participants described ways that they showed and maintained a certain view of themselves. When considering participants' visible and known life stories, discussed earlier, participants described a want for privacy and to have control over their own life story. This

related to the theme of 'getting away and finding space', as retreating to a separate space was used by participants as a way of hiding the version of themselves and their emotional experience which they did not want others to see. When their internal or external experience was becoming overwhelming, some participants escaped to maintain the self-presentation they desired, and avoid the unwanted repercussions of these being seen and heard. For other participants, however, they were more open about some of their experiences, and the young people described having people around them who they believed cared and supported them, and who they could talk to. As a result of having the opportunity to talk and be heard, some participants described that this was a way that they dealt with difficult experiences. Talking to others was used to manage and cope with these experiences and the associated thoughts and emotions. Tyreasha spoke about this when considering a photograph of her foster dad and the role he had in her life.

Tyreasha:	Erm it's pretty hard because erm like I said I've never had a real dad to talk to so erm I've erm never had a proper childhood and I've also never had anyone to talk to. But now that I've moved to this foster placement I have literally everyone to talk to. Yeah
Interviewer	And what's that like?
Tyreasha:	It just makes me feel free that I can get stuff off my chest. Like all my anger that I've got on my mind and stuff I can just get it off my chest by talking about it (598-606).

Tyreasha described being 'free' and the sense of relief that talking to others brought. Talking meant she did not have to contain these difficult feelings and deal with them alone, releasing her from this weight and restraint on herself. Other participants felt that it was not always possible through talking for others to do anything to change a situation. Through listening and the young person being heard, however, this process was experienced as care and support, and assisted participants to cope emotionally. Through talking with others, and experiencing support via this process, participants were able to progress from difficult external experiences and unwanted emotions toward a wanted present version of themselves. Mr Popper in the next extract described talking with her birth family, with the process of feeling supported through talking, rather than advice giving and finding solutions, being the goal.

Mr Popper:	Like if I need their help or if I'm upset about something I can talk to them.
Interviewer:	What happens?
Mr Popper:	They'll help me if they can like, yeah...if they can't help they'll like try and – they'll try but sometimes it – they can't do owt much. (46-49).

Mr Popper's birth family were unable to impact on many difficult situations in her life, due to their contact being limited and there being restricted power available to them to cause change. Being seen, heard, and understood, however, led to her feeling close and cared for and this helped her to move forward.

5.2.4.1 Conclusion

Visibility and being seen, heard, and understood for participants involved a want to interact in their place in the present. Participants wanted the present version of themselves to be seen and heard, whilst keeping aspects of themselves, particularly associated with the past and how they have been previously, hidden and invisible. Being seen and heard was important to participants as it enabled them to cope within their place and to feel reassured that they would be able to cope in the future, which led to increased feelings of freedom from the weight that they may have once experienced. Through being open to others and expressing themselves and this being understood, participants had an experience of being important enough to be noticed by others. Being successful in their place and able to be the way they want to be depended on participants being noticed and understood. This freed participants to act in a way which is coherent with who they were or wanted to become. When this version of themselves was then seen by others this began to allow participants to feel accepted and liked, by both themselves and others in their place.

5.2.5 Theme 3: Being a part of the place and being with others.

Within the places they lived, the young people were embedded in a family and within a community of people through their school and the activities they participated in. Participant narratives centred around the importance of connection, belonging and feeling a part of the place in which they lived. Through developing relationships participants found companionship, support and acceptance, and they talked about the impact of the people in their lives. Being part of their family and their wider context provided participants with an opportunity to feel included, and for some participants this led to feeling that they could be open, and depend upon the people in their place for support. Participants experienced development from within the groups they were in, with this having a perpetuating effect in which being with others impacted on who they were and led to an improved fit with the group.

Participants discussed the significance of their foster families and how living within the family setting and being part of that family had impacted on them. Participants described feeling accepted by their foster family and how this allowed them to be more carefree, and to be themselves with less worry and to feel less constrained than in other places. This included reference to feeling more carefree in different locations within their current place, as well in relation to places that they no longer access. When considering her foster dad and the rest of her foster family, Tyreasha, below, described feeling free whilst at home and a sense of a return to being a child. This contrasted with Tyreasha's descriptions at other points in her interview when she spoke about a lost childhood due to having to take on adult responsibilities to care for herself and her sister.

Tyreasha: Yeah like me and my younger sister never actually had a real childhood so I still act like a child even at home. And erm it's the only place that I really feel free and understood. (524-526).

Tyreasha explained feeling both 'free' and 'understood', suggesting she might not feel one without the other. She perceived that these feelings were only possible because of the context she was now in, as this allowed her to 'act like a child' which contrasted with the need to be responsible in her former home, where there were expectations and responsibilities that prevented her being 'free'. Through being able to function within their current place and be open about themselves and their experience, due to being accepted and included, some participants described no longer having to contain and hide parts of their experiences. Other participants spoke about the parts of their experience which gave rise to these feelings of being accepted, and the importance of their family making them *"feel welcome and stuff"* (Junior, 576), with emphasis being given to the initial process of integrating,. The initial interaction with people was described as important by No Pseudonym, in the following extract. He emphasised the importance of these first interactions and first impressions whilst talking of why it mattered that others got a sense of who he was through his choice of clothing.

No Pseudonym: That determines what they're going to be like with you for the rest of the time you knew them. I mean it's like my friends as well 'cos I mean you know if I did, 'cos I used to not have like, I used to look a right muppet I used to, I don't know but I mean the fact, and that was a sense of judgement that people had about me 'cos the way I, the way I talked, the way I was and you know people would make that stereotypical judgement straight away. But I mean it's like that with foster carers as well they make, you can, well the way, the way you, the way you dress, the way you speak, the way you are sort of like you know it tells them about you and clothes, and clothes and that are important for it. (312-325).

No Pseudonym discussed the judgement he experienced from others and the way this related to the stigma and stereotypes that he believed his first impression could present. This was related to how he presented himself, a part of which was his clothing, with this communicating who he was to everyone in his place. This first impression was described by No Pseudonym as a crucial moment, as how the rest of his time with these people progressed was dependent on the impression that he gave initially. If the initial interaction was not as No Pseudonym would wish, this was predicted to impact negatively on the proceeding interactions and it is unlikely he would feel 'carefree' in this interaction. There was a pressure to get this right, due to these high stakes, and No Pseudonym was critical of himself in the past, due to not showing a version of himself to others that he was happy with. In order to be with others and be accepted, No Pseudonym presented himself in a certain way, with there being a constant need to present in this way to feel welcome and accepted. No Pseudonym felt aware of the judgement of others as soon as he arrived in a new placement, with the destabilisation of the move and the associated emotions appearing to be seen as unacceptable if he was to make a satisfactory first

impression. A fear of not being unconditionally accepted was apparent. A need for unconditional acceptance and feeling welcoming therefore appeared to be a key need, particularly early in the interaction, if participants were to feel freer from their worries.

A different aspect to feeling accepted and welcome, both initially and into their current foster placement, was explained by some participants as involving the development of a caring and more open relationship with their foster carers, such as being able to *"talk to them literally about anything that I can"* (Tyreasha, line 503-504). This led to some participants discussing the importance of the presence of these people in their life, such as when At was discussing his foster carers and said *"I'm just glad that they're there"* (line 547). This presence was expressed as concrete, and led to participants feeling that the people in their lives were dependable, available, and trustworthy. Mr Popper discussed such availability when discussing a photograph of her foster family:

> Mr Popper: Because like every day they are always going to be there when I wake up like, and they are always going to be there until I go to bed at night and everything. They are going to be there all the time (526-528).

The way in which Mr Popper drew attention to specific parts of her day emphasised her experience of constant and consistently available care, and their provision of support throughout her day. This experience of support enabled Mr Popper to feel reassured that she would be able to manage events in her life, and that she would not have to do so alone. This contributed to an understanding of being a part of the family and being with others as referring to the availability of dependable relationships with others, from whom the participants could receive support throughout their experiences. The discussion of the day in specific parts, and the constant availability of care was striking. It appeared that a usually taken-for-granted experience was of conscious importance to Mr Popper, possibly due to an ability to compare this experience with an experience of unavailable and distant care. Other participants, such as Junior, described that *"it's good to be in a family"* (577-578) and the positive impact that being a part of this had on him, *"I just came to - came into this family and yeah, I just changed"* (Junior, 585). Being with their foster family was described by four participants as important, whilst No Pseudonym and Melissa did not talk about their current foster carer or foster family in this way. All of the young people, however, appeared to seek a sense of inclusion and to be a part of something, and connected with others; for some participants this was found outside of the home environment. No Pseudonym's interview largely prioritised the importance of looking after yourself, although it did include discussion of the importance of others in reference to teachers and school friends. The following extract came at the end of the interview with No Pseudonym when he was discussing the things he could not photograph. Until this point in the interview, relationships and connections with his current place had sparsely featured in the interview.

> No Pseudonym: Possibly I'd say school. I mean I didn't manage to like but erm with school as I said that's, that affect, that sort of like affects who you are

	as well as a human being I mean my school I mean I love it you know I go every day. If I didn't have school I'd be bored out of my head and I don't know what would happen I'd have no friends, I'd have no one so and I like and that's why I like and I like school. For that reason
Interviewer:	OK so school's important to you, you said without school you
No Pseudonym:	I'd have no one, I'd practically have no one. I'd be sad, I'd be depressed. (821-831).

No Pseudonym's description that without school he would have "no one" suggested the lack of inclusion and relationships he experienced in other parts of his place, such as his foster family. The wider context impacted on the experience of himself, which suggested that being a part of the wider context in his place was formative in his development and his experiences. School also provided No Pseudonym with occupation which enabled him to better moderate the time he spent interacting with his internal world and rescued him from a possible *"sad"* and *"depressed"* version of himself. His access to an external place which he was a part of, therefore, was depended upon to maintain his emotional wellbeing. School for No Pseudonym was about connection with others and being part of a wider community, rather than learning and development through academic work; within this he had found a place as part of something that he did not have elsewhere. For No Pseudonym his relationships at school were greatly important as they were not an addendum to supportive family relationships, but were instead a source of significant relationships and the only place he felt a part of something. Earlier in the interview No Pseudonym had discussed the importance of his earphones, which the above extract and his experience of having "no one" contextualised, as he said "*Like at least I've got somewhere, like I've got something there to help me. Instead of like people I've got some, an object like simple and that I carry around with me every day*" (line 127-129). For him, his earphones gave him a level of support and safety that most people did not.

A different aspect to being a part of was the impact that this had on how participants viewed themselves, as being themselves for other participants also appeared to be a situated experience. Participants shared the importance that they believe the people in their families and social groups which they were a part of has had on them becoming themselves. No Pseudonym felt that a lack of connection with others would negatively impact on who he was as a 'human being'; this emphasis on 'human being' contributed an understanding of this connection and relationship core to No Pseudonym and his experience and, more fundamentally, his existence. Similarly, Junior, in the following extract, described what it was like to be a part of his *"loving and caring family"* (line 582).

Junior:	Don't know, I just, I just like so many things have happened and then I just came to – came into this family and yeah, I just changed. And like better things for myself, so far. And important thing is I'm happy. (584-586).

Junior described himself as growing and changing since he moved to his current place and the influence others have had on that. The transition he has experienced from the person

who arrived to himself at the time of the research was described as connected to care from others and being a part of his family, but also the possibilities he has been able to access via his place. This was not associated with a singular event or person but instead the impact of the place and possibilities within it as a whole. Junior highlights his happiness as most important, which may reflect that this was the greatest change through being a part of his place and the groups within it. As participants appeared to view themselves as being a result of the places which they inhabit, their view of themselves seemed fragile due to discussion of the possible changes to themselves that could happen if they moved. Feelings of stability and that they fitted well with their context were discussed. For No Pseudonym school was described as this stability as it provided an environment in which he felt he belonged and which was stable with an expectation he would remain there for the rest of his education.

> No Pseudonym: Because you're 'cos unlike other places where I've been but I mean I've been kicked out, I've been said I have to go and so and so but to know I can't, I won't be able to, I won't be leaving any time soon now just for whatever reason, yeah (877-880).

The extract above followed a part of the interview in which No Pseudonym discussed his belief that if he were to move away from school and his friends that *"I think I'd be different"* (line 870). No Pseudonym's experience of being 'kicked out' described a lack of control over the place in which he resided and therefore a lack of control and an instability in the person he was. It may therefore be that, through being a part of somewhere, and feeling accepted, cared for and connected, participants were able to worry less about this fragility of self.

Being embedded and having relationships with the wider social system were also discussed as important by participants due to the care and support that they offer, similar to the foster family, and how *"they're always going to look out for me, like if I ever get in trouble they'll always look out for me"* (Mr Popper, 225-226). For others, companionship through having people to do activities with was described as an additional function to their relationships with the wider system. Friendships and being with others was about it being *"just cool, being – doing loads of things together"* (Junior, 326-327). When friendships and relationships with others were described by participants as a source of support, it was stated that this assisted them to manage their life and to feel prepared if difficulties were to occur. Tyreasha, in the following extract, was describing her conversation with friends whom she walks to and from school with and the impact this has on her.

> Tyreasha: I feel free when I'm walking to and from school if I have to, because I can literally talk to my friends about anything that's happened at school (610-611).

Tyreasha again returned to her description that the feeling of support and an ability to talk led to her feeling 'free' from the weight of her problems, due to the support she received from friends. Through talking and the availability of support and care, Tyreasha experienced relief from this, and a release to freedom from the things which had burdened her up until that

point and restrained her from being herself. Other participants, like Tyreasha, described the caring and understanding relationships that they had formed through being a part of their foster family, friendship group, and school. This, along with support and care across contexts, such as home, school, and the community, led to participants believing people were *"always there"* (Mr Popper, line 216). Participants described speaking with these people and feeling understood, and how this care and support enabled them to cope with their life and the difficulties they experienced. These young people therefore appeared to remain open to trust and new relationships. Some participants spoke about a relatively wide support system which they were a part of and were able to access, and described choosing who to talk to about different topics. It appeared, however, for Mr Popper, in the following extract, that what was important was the quality of the relationships that she was a part of.

> Mr Popper: It doesn't really bother me how many friends I've got just as long as I've got someone that I can trust (244-245).

As trust in the relationships was important to her, the ability to depend on a limited amount of people and for them to respond to what she needed was important. Trust was described as being accepted and understood, which allowed Mr Popper to depend on her friends for support, irrelevant of the problem. Another dimension to experiencing life with others alongside them, and feeling accepted and understood, was the way in which young people spoke about events in the family's and friends' lives of which they have been a part . Through shared experiences with their foster families, participants described the creation of shared memories of which they were a part. These events in their lives with the foster family were not always positive experiences, however what was described as important was the shared experience with the family. In the following extract, Tyreasha described a difficult experience in which another young person who had lived in the placement was adopted. The day she was adopted was described as a hard day for the family as a whole, with Tyreasha and her family sharing in the experience and so the memory became co-owned and shared.

> Tyreasha: This is an important photo because erm it was really hard to give her up but then again she was going to a good home and we were literally crying all day it wasn't fun. Our eyes were literally all red raw literally. (356-359).

Tyreasha included her foster family in her narrative about this experience, describing this using 'we' and 'our' due to the shared nature of the experience, rather than something that Tyreasha felt she went through alone. Tyreasha was able to remain with her foster family and expressed her upset with them as part of their shared and expressed upset. A want to be with others at difficult moments contrasted with descriptions at other times in the interviews about using space to process emotions in private, due to not wanting these to be seen or to impact on the people around them. Participants therefore appeared to want balance between wanting to be a part of and with others, whilst some participants also (Mr Popper and At) spoke about a preference to spend some time doing activities on their own. This was greater than a want for

space at times of distress, and reflected a want to undertake activities alone so that they can do them the way they wish. At stated that he prefers *"just doing what I want to do"* (line 149), at another point in the interview, however, At spoke about his enjoyment of doing activities with his family and being with them. Mr Popper discussed her foster family and the balanced levels of noise and activity she preferred in her environment, following stating "I don't like loud noises but I also don't like it when it's like too quiet" (line 641-642).

> Mr Popper: Er... I don't know it does because I know like they're there even if I can't see them but I can hear them so I know they are always there (650-651).

There was a balance of distance and closeness described. When people were not seen or heard by Mr Popper, feelings of dependability and availability were compromised. Quietness is associated with Mr Popper possibly feeling more vulnerability and alone, due to silence symbolising a lack of immediate support and reciprocally being kept in mind. If care and support, and the family or friendship group Mr Popper was a part of could not be seen or heard, its accessibility was unreliable. Closeness and distance also related to participants' experiences of being a part of their birth family. Tyreasha, Mr Popper, and Melissa lived in foster care with siblings, and so part of their foster family system were their birth siblings. This led to an experience in which they were within the family as an individual whilst also being part of a smaller subsystem. Melissa described feeling grateful for the opportunity to be with her brother and to see him developing, through being a part of his life and his experiences. Being a part of her brother's life was important to Melissa, and this experience contrasted with her relationship with her sister who was adopted and so they do not live together. Melissa stated *"watching my little brother growing up is meaning a lot to me and it means a lot to him I think"*(line 760-761). Melissa, in the following extract, discussed the experience of living with her brother in her foster placement.

> Melissa: I've got my brother in my life now and I wouldn't feel loved if I didn't have my brother or my sister with me. But I've got my brother with me, I've got a part of my family with me erm and I feel loved and everything about that and with my sister I know it's hard for her as well as me but I've still feel loved, I look at those photos and think well she's a lovely girl and I still feel loved about her. And I still love, I still love her (1030-1036).

Through living with her brother Melissa experienced feelings of connection with her birth family and that she was a part of the family she no longer lived with. This relationship and being a part of his life led to feelings of love towards others, and also feelings of love toward her. Melissa had experienced loss, with the adoption of her sister being described as significant. As a result, she had experienced what it was like to lose someone who you loved and who loved you. Whilst loved within her place 'now', she seemed concerned that she may have to experience further loss and reflected upon this to consider the lack of love the loss of her brother would lead to and what this would be like. Within her place she was cared for, supported, and

her basic needs were met; however, her need for love depended upon her brother being a part of her life. This feeling of being loved did not exist with anyone else in her place.

In addition to birth siblings leading to feelings of love, connection with and being a part of their birth family, living with birth siblings contributed to the role taken within their place and context. Whilst being in a new place, participants spoke about taking a caring role for younger children, including their siblings, with the responsibility to care for their siblings appearing to continue beyond becoming looked-after. This care provider role was related to their position within the foster family, as well as within their birth family and past situation. Participants described these roles as giving them a position within the family, and it appeared this helped participants to understand how they fit in as a part of their current place. Tyreasha was placed with her young sister, who she described having the responsibility to care for whilst with her birth family due to her father being *"uncapable of looking after both of us"* (line 396-397). In the following extract, Tyreasha spoke about the care her foster family provide for her and her sister.

> Tyreasha: Erm it means to me that erm I can be trusted with younger children as well as people my own age and also erm look after them if say if my younger sister needed to tidy her room and erm my foster carer needed to go out shopping and we were left with my older sister she would erm she would help me look after either my nephews or [Niece 1] my niece or my younger sister. Like I've always got a second hand on, hand on deck let's just say if someone, say if my younger sister got hurt she would always be there 'cos she works at the school that she goes to so yeah. (422-430).

It seemed that whilst Tyreasha trusted her foster family's ability to care for her sister, she continued to view herself in the position of care provider, somewhere in the family hierarchy between adult and child. Tyreasha had positioned herself as care provider for the younger children and alongside her adult foster sister, rather than in the child role. For Tyreasha and Melissa whilst they were embedded in a new context where they were not wholly responsible for caring, this remained important to them. As a result of possessing a caring role, participants described developing a view of themselves as trustworthy and caring, with Tyreasha stating she 'can be trusted'. This led to participants comparing themselves now with how they were, and how the caring role they now hold and their success in this position demonstrated growth toward a better version of themselves. For instance, Tyreasha stated *"cos when I was 9 and 8 I couldn't be trusted with people because I was really feisty with them"* (line 80-81). Through being a part of the foster family and taking a caring and responsible role, participants described attempting to prove themselves to those in their place.

Sibling relationships and the role taken within the foster family as a care provider also appeared to relate to how other participants viewed themselves. Mr Popper and Melissa described the way their siblings behaved and how this was related to how they believed they

were viewed by others. In the following extract, Mr Popper was describing the relationship between her, her foster sister, and her siblings.

Mr Popper:	Well sometimes my foster sister, that one, um she – we get on her nerves a little bit so she's – sometimes she gets really frustrated with us because we're always getting on her nerves and...
Interviewer:	What do you do to get on her nerves?
Mr Popper:	I don't know because sometimes we do something but we don't realise we've done it and then she starts like telling us off or something.
Interviewer:	So you sometimes do stuff but you don't realise you've done it
Mr Popper:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Like what?
Mr Popper:	I don't know. It's mainly my sister that bugs her (663-672).

Mr Popper experienced some tension in the relationship with her foster sister, and when reflecting on her role in this, described that tension mostly originated with her sister. It appeared, however, that the way her younger siblings behaved and interacted was intertwined with how she believed she was viewed by her foster sister. Mr Popper's view of herself seemed related to the view of her sibling subsystem as a whole, rather than her as an individual. The role of being a caregiver for her siblings, therefore, may have included moderating her behaviour and interactions in order to moderate the view that others held of her.

Box 1: Unique examples of loss and connection with birth family

Two participants, Mr Popper and Melissa, offered unique insights into how they managed loss and connection, with the importance of having relationships with and still being a part of their absent and distant birth family system being discussed. These are included here due to their centrality in the narratives of Mr Popper and Melissa, with their importance underpinning much of what was discussed in their interviews by these two participants. They were, however, quite different from the experiences described by the other four participants and so it was decided they would not form a theme due to them not representing the experiences of the group as a collective. They were, however, of interest and so will now be commented upon.

Whilst Mr Popper also spoke about the importance and impact of her foster family, for Melissa the relationship with her birth family and her want to return to this setting and be a part of this was central. The relationships in their lives were discussed, with emotional closeness and physical proximity appearing unrelated. The absent and distant birth family members continued to possess emotional significance in their lives, with solutions to maintaining a relationship with these people being described. Mr Popper described a relational system in which she has a range of people in her life whom she feels close to, but whom she gets to have contact with infrequently. In the following extract Mr Popper discusses her relationship with her aunt and her partner, whom she has contact with every four months.

Mr Popper:	Um, close to them. Like I'm pretty much close to everybody but...I think I'm closest to them more than anyone else.

Interviewer:	Okay can you tell me a bit more about that?
Mr Popper:	Because like they're always there because like I said even if I don't want them there they are always going to be there (406-411).

Mr Popper's feelings of closeness were discussed without discussion of the impact of distance and lack of contact on the relationship, describing, instead, closeness and that they were *"always going to be there"* for her. The relationships with these family members and her discussion of their ability to 'be there' appeared to exist within the parameters of contact, the time when they were together, with her feelings of closeness and emotional connection relating to these times. Mr Popper and Melissa described how they use memories to maintain relationships with absent and distant family, and to manage the times when they were not together. Mr Popper, in the following extract, described the importance of happy memories, and why she liked it when her aunt and her partner, *"they'll take us like somewhere fun so we can make some happy memories"* (line 439-440).

Interviewer:	Does it matter to you that you get to make happy memories?
Mr Popper:	Er yeah because I know like I'm always going to remember them (450-451).

Mr Popper's happy memories and a photograph of her birth sister taken by Melissa were accessible and available to them, which appeared to bring reassurance. Through accessing these happy memories, this assisted them to manage feeling closest to those who were furthest away and to keep members of their birth family as a part of their life. Melissa used a photograph of her sister to maintain feelings of connection with her sister and that she was still a part of her life, discussed in the following extract, despite their physical separation and distance between them.

Melissa:	I thought that one was really, really special I look at it every night and I have to say 'I hope you're OK' and then I go to sleep and I wake up tomorrow and go 'are you OK?' and I know I'm in my own voice and I go 'yes she's fine. Just go to school'.
Interviewer:	Mmm and does it matter to you that you're able to kind of say that to the picture?
Melissa:	Sometimes yes, sometimes I dunno. But maybe I'd get used to it doing it all the time. When I go upstairs in my room I just go how's your day been? It feels really awkward when you don't answer, when she doesn't answer back 'cos it's strange, you normally answer people back when you say 'how's your day been?' or something like that, it feels really weird. (209-221).

Melissa used the photograph of her sister to maintain a relationship and communicate with her in the present, despite them living separately and their contact being via letter once a year. Melissa used the term 'you' when she said it's 'awkward when you don't answer' as if her communication via the picture was imagined as directly with her sister or was perhaps heard by her. This image provided reassurance to Melissa, through allowing her to continue to watch

over her sister, and to imagine a conversation in which they were both doing okay.

5.2.5.1 Conclusion

When participants moved to their place they became a part of a family system and an accompanying wider context. Within their place, participants described the importance of being with others and a part of what is going on. A sense of inclusion was important for participants, and was facilitated by initial interactions and the ways their new place made them feel welcome. Through being a part of their place, participants felt supported and more able to cope with their experiences, with this support providing feelings of reassurance to participants. For some participants their sense of being a part of their place was found in their wider context, rather than their family environment, which provided a sense of stability through being a part of the community group. There were times when participants recognised the need to use space to moderate their interactions with the environment, however they wished to remain close to the group they are a part of, so to reintegrate as soon as they felt able to.

5.2.6 Theme 4: The importance of animals as a second soul: Care, connection, and lack of conditionality.

Participants shared the importance of care and connection in their lives, and how through the theme of 'being a part of the place and being with others' they experience care and connection from people in the places they reside. Participants also described the importance of developing and showing a wanted, preferred self and the use of space to emotionally moderate and keep experiences private, which underpinned the themes of 'getting away and finding space' and '(In)visibility and Being (un)seen, (un)heard, and (mis)understood'. This led to an understanding of the conditionality that participants experienced within their lives and relationships with others. When considering what was important to participants, there was a want for care, connection, and to have relationships which lacked conditionality. The animals in participants' lives were important for this, with the role animals had featuring across five participants' interviews.

Through interactions with animals, participants found a connection with the world and described that they *"don't feel part of anything without an animal"* (At, 444). Without animals, participants felt separate and not included. Through their relationship with animals, participants found a way to integrate and engage with their social world in the place which they resided. Through creating a relationship with an animal, participants did not experience the world alone. Melissa, when considering her dog in the following extract, described the impact this animal had on her experience within her place.

> Melissa: I talk about [my dog] every time I go at school so people ask me questions how is your dog, she's lovely, she's adorable, she's, she's

really, really good and she's fine by the way. It's like you're so lucky to have a Newfoundland dog, I know I am (683-687).

For Melissa, the importance of her dog went beyond the relationship with the animal, and assisted her to connect with her external context more widely. Melissa attributed this to the specific dog she has, rather than pets more widely, which emphasised the special relationship she felt she had with this dog. Animals provided participants with a shared experience alongside other humans and assisted participants to develop connections beyond their relationship with the animal, leading to them being seen and heard by others. Melissa, again, spoke about her dog and the connection it provided with others

> Melissa: Yeah I would feel left out and lonely without [my dog] because not
> even the family or anything I would feel left out on myself so I would
> feel lonely inside myself 'cos not having a lovely big fluffy dog and
> cute faced dog as well would feel need lonely and basically she's like a
> friend [my dog] is like a friend on a weekend so if I don't have my
> friends out I go sit next to [my dog], I sit on the floor with [my dog]
> and she just licks my face and puts her paw on me and that makes me
> feel like I've got a special friend. But dog wise. (642-650).

Melissa's dog created feelings of inclusion with others, but also helped her to remain present in the external world and to not be alone and inwardly focused. She went on to say *"if I didn't have the connection with her I don't know where I'll be. I'd be lost in my mind"* (673-674). This connection with the external world allowed Melissa to moderate the time spent focusing on internal experiences, such as her thoughts and emotions. Melissa was concerned that a life without her dog would have reduced her ability to interact with her external context and cope with her internal context. For Melissa, her dog saved her from an unwanted alternative experience, being in her head with her internal experiences for company. Her dog grounded Melissa in her environment and provides a 'special friend' to experience the world with. Other participants also described the way that animals helped them to feel connected to another living being and connected to the world. Animals were companions for the young people, providing company for them as they navigate through their life within their place. Junior, in the following extract, spoke about his pet snake.

> Junior: When I first got him I were a bit scared but he's like my best friend
>   really.
> Interviewer: Is he your best friend?
> Junior: Hmmm.
> Interviewer: Tell me a bit more about that?
> Junior: Just do everything with him, take him out a lot (104-109).

As a companion to always undertake activities with by his side, Junior experienced his snake as his best friend. This suggested that he experienced a connection with his pet, which he did not experience with another human, or that this relationship had qualities that he did not experience elsewhere. As his snake was present for 'everything' it may be that the availability and dependability of this relationship were the reasons for this special bond. The relationship with their pets also brought responsibilities for the participants, with their animals depending

upon them and their availability for care. Melissa described the routine that caring for a dog provided and her familiarity with this as a part of her life.

> Melissa: Not having a dog would feel really weird 'cos you're used to have taking the dog out for a walk taking it, giving it some water and everything (633-635).

If Melissa were to not have a dog to care for, a gap would exist in her life as she would not have the responsibility to undertake animal care tasks in the caregiver role having a pet provided. This role also gave the young people routine, which during more difficult experiences and periods of their life may have brought stability. Through having an animal in their life, participants had a role and another being to interact and have a relationship with, which gave participants purpose and occupation. For instance, the routine of care for their pets helped participants to access and create space within their lives, with time spent with the animals providing escape from the noise of life. For instance Junior stated it was *"peaceful, going for a walk"* (line 481) with his dog and he would *"take him for a walk to just like make him happy"* (line 485). This was an example of the reciprocal gains described by participants of their relationships with animals

Animals provided participants with something to occupy them and their interest, as they were *"someone like I can get out when I'm bored and stuff"* (Junior, line 121). This routine and dependency on the participants for care led to the young people experiencing positive emotions and attributing positive characteristics to themselves. Junior discussed, in the extract below, what he believes his pet snake would say about him.

> Junior: I don't know, I look after him a lot and stuff so…don't know. Caring guy (186-187).

The relationship between Junior and his snake depended on him taking a caregiver position, and this role had led to Junior internalising a view of himself as caring. Other participants discussed pets as providing similar experiences of caring for another who was dependent upon them, and the feelings of being caring, reliable and trustworthy that were generated through this. The care in the relationship between participants and their pets was not one directional; some participants also reported that the animals in their lives offered them care and were used by them to cope with difficult situations and emotions in their lives. For the young people, the animals were seen as accepting and non-judgemental, which enabled the young people to talk about events and process emotions. When considering their use of space in the 'getting away and finding space' theme, participants felt unable to undertake these processes with the people in their context, instead using space to keep these their emotions and experiences hidden and private. Tyreasha, in the following extract, spoke about a photograph of one of her cats and the way the cat helped her to cope with events in her life.

> Tyreasha: Erm well this is our cat and she's special in my life because like even when I'm down I literally sit in the conservatory where she's always there and she comes and sits on my knee and she like really fluffy and

caring and she's, she's a really timid cat that's why she's always stays in there (211-215).

For Tyreasha, her cat was available to her at times of distress, and responded to her need for connection and care following a difficult day. The relationship and support offered by animals was also described by other participants as partly due to the availability of the animals and their unconditional interest and regard. This was in contrast to people, who were described as more complex and so, dependent on events in their lives and their internal state, related to participants in different ways. For instance, when At described another young person in his placement as *"very sensitive. Like he's one of them people who will, if you get in his way or anything if he's doing anything he's like first to say something"* (line 121-122). If participants were to not have a pet they would lose this unconditional relationship, and the support they offered to assist participants to in managing their difficulties. Care, support, and connection was profoundly described by Tyreasha, when discussing the connection she had with one of her cats. She referred to this relationship as giving her a 'second soul' stating that *"it feels like I've got like another soul living inside me. Like instead of my soul I've got the cat's soul as well"* (line 320-321). An experience of care and connection with her cat and how this supported her within her life was described in the following extract.

> Tyreasha: Yeah and that it makes me just, it makes me feel like if I get hurt or worried at school it's like I've always got a second instinct by my side (274-275).

Tyreasha symbolically carried around with her the caring relationship she had with her cat and this made her feel more able to proceed with her life and manage the events that occurred outside her home. This led to her feeling like she was not experiencing life alone, and when she encountered difficulties that she was supported through them by another, who cared for her. Participants described the animals in their lives as being chosen for this role due to their consistency and predictability, though participants also shared other reasons for their choice of preferred animal. Phrases used included *"cute and gentle"* (Melissa, line 638), *"cute and fluffy"* (Mr Popper, 749), and *"fluffy and caring and she's, she's a really timid cat"* (Tyreasha, line 214). Animals were described in ways that prioritised the characteristics of their appearance and behaviour which made the animals well suited to the roles of carer, companion, and for physical affection. There was also a discussion of animals which the young people did not have this close and caring relationship with, due to a mismatch between the young person's preference and the animals' characteristics. Mr Popper took a photograph of her dog, and described the unpredictable behaviour of this animal.

> Mr Popper: Sometimes he's a little bit annoying like because when we're – if he's not in his cage and like sometimes we're like, my sister and brother like to play with him but he starts barking and he's got a really loud bark so I don't really like it because I don't like loud noises. Other times at night like when we're just sat on sofa watching TV he'll just cuddle up in a ball next to you (695-698).

For Mr Popper, at times, her dog was too loud, which was aversive and disliked, and whilst sometimes he behaved in a way that was more acceptable to her, there was a lack of consistency in his behaviour; although she liked the physical affection and closeness when he was calm and sat next to her. Other participants also discussed reciprocal physical affection with the animals in their lives. Physical touch with animals underpinned the participants' experiences of a two-way connection and relationship. The physical connection and affection with animals was a comfort to participants when they experienced distress, and assisted them to moderate their emotions and so supported their coping. Melissa, in the subsequent extract, described her dog and the physical affection within their relationship.

> Melissa: She helps me by if I'm upset erm and I want to give her a cuddle and normally it makes me happy like thank you for licking my face but she makes me happy when I'm upset and down and kind, when I'm worried about something she just licks my face and I'm not worried about anything anymore. Like yesterday I was worried about my friend and she just licked my face it's like I'm not worried about them anymore (562-568).

The affection Melissa's dog showed toward her led to her feeling her problems were lessened, and released her from her worries. The relationship with her dog allowed Melissa to believe she was supported and able to handle any problem, due to the comfort her dog would bring. Time spent with their animals also had a role for participants when considering the theme of '(in)visibility and Being (un)seen, (un)heard, and (mis)understood'. Participants described that they were able to speak and feel heard and understood by the animals in their life. Much of this communication was one-directional, however participants described this as an experience of being heard and understood. Tyreasha described talking with her cat and the support that her cat offered her through listening.

> Tyreasha: Erm it was actually quite fun 'cos I could actually instead of her butting in, in all my convers, in every word I said she literally just laid there and listened to me. So it's quite, cats are quite like people, they listen to you (240-244).

Tyreasha valued talking with her cat as she did not 'butt in', and allowed Tyreasha to speak without interruption. Tyreasha emphasised the importance of being listened to, as being heard and the opportunity to talk was important. Tyreasha wanted to share her experiences and be heard rather than be talked to and to have a two-way conversation. Through the process of talking with animals, participants felt supported to solve problems in their lives which enabled them to cope in difficult situations, experiencing relief from difficult feelings. Tyreasha continued to describe her interaction with her cat, in the following extract.

> Tyreasha: Yeah she erm she looked at me and like, like with sorryful eyes like saying oh poor you and stuff and it was funny but it was also understanding at the same time.
>
> Interviewer   And what was that like being understood?

| Tyreasha | It was like, like it was like the cat listened to you and understood every word you said. It was just, it was just amazing (264-269). |

Being listened to and understood was an 'amazing' experience for Tyreasha and it may be that this experience was unusual for her. Whilst Tyreasha was the one speaking, she interpreted her cat's behaviour as communicating care and attention to her problems. The opportunity to talk and share her problems was sufficient for Tyreasha and led to a deep connection, with it appearing that at difficult times she did not want advice or a verbal reply.

Figure 7. A photograph of her cat by Tyreasha.

Reflexive Box 8: Incorporating the visual into the interpretative process

As participants described their connection and relationships with animals, this remained abstract and relatively disconnected until during analysis I considered Tyreasha's description of *"sorryful eyes"* (line 264) alongside the image of the cat. I realised that each time I had viewed the image it was the eyes that drew me in, and just like Tyreasha's description it was via the eyes that I was connecting with the image. The cats gaze communicated to me that I had its full attention. It was difficult to get away from and focused on me as the viewer and Tyreasha as the photographer. This experience assisted me to see the cat in a similar way to Tyreasha, and to appreciate that process of connection and relationships with animals throughout the dataset.

I was also struck by the contrast of the eyes against the black fur of the cat. It was the eyes which stood out in a context of blackness. This symbolised to me how the connection with the animals may be unique in a context of difficulty, disconnect, and not

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being heard for these participants. This was also informed by No Pseudonym's image of his earphones. This was not so much the case for Tyreasha but her image of the cat and its eyes opened up my thinking about social connection and being understood for all the images. This image illuminated this interpretation and representations of connectedness, relationships, and understanding, assisting them to emerge for the data as a whole.

Whilst the importance of animals was clear for the majority of participants, unlike other meaningful possessions, these were not brought with young people when they moved places. Thus a loss of a connection and relationship ensued, which the young people experienced as just as important but sometimes of greater strength than the humans in their past life. The young people described choosing, nurturing, and possessing a caring role for these animals and then they were moved and the animals were gone. At described the recent move to his new place and the animals he left behind.

At:	I used to have two yellow bellied slider turtles.
Interviewer:	You used to have two turtles?
At:	Yeah but when I left I didn't quite get to bring them here, so. (413-416).

When At moved places he 'didn't quite' get to bring his turtles with him to his new place, indicating a hopefulness that this could have occurred until close to the point that he was moved. He had to leave his turtles behind, despite the importance that they had in his life.

Whilst animals may be important in the young people's lives, a lack of ownership creates a complexity in this relationship, as their pets may belong to their foster carers. Melissa, despite feeling very close to her dog stated *"Well she's not my pet dog but I act as though she's my pet dog and [my dog] means not, the world to me"* (line 558-559). The relationship does not wholly belong to the young person or the animal, and was overseen by the owner, meaning if the young people move on, this relationship, and their experience of reciprocal care and understanding was left behind with their previous foster placement.

5.2.6.1 Conclusion

The animals in the young peoples' lives held importance to participants due to them being a source of support and care, a being the participants felt emotionally attuned with and provided someone to talk to during difficult times. This experience led to participants feeling that they were able to share their difficulties and, due to the availability and accessibility of their animals, participants felt more able to cope with their lives due to the relationship with their pets. Animals provided a non-judgemental and accepting relationship for participants, and this led to an experience for participants of being open about themselves and this being accepted. Animals provided participants with an opportunity to also care for another living being, and so the relationship was experienced as reciprocal with both depending on the other for their

wellbeing. This reciprocity was also in relation to physical affection, with animals facilitating the participants being able to have an experience of an emotional and physical closeness.

5.2.7 Theme 5 – Getting to know myself: Part of creating a future and navigating through life.

Within their discussion of what was important in their lives, participants discussed the effort that they were putting into themselves and their lives in order to navigate towards a wanted future. Participants described that through doing activities and trying different things, they have explored and were able to discover what was important to them and what they were good at, and so had learned about themselves. Once participants had developed this knowledge, they described using it to guide them in both the present and toward the future. Participants sought out further available opportunities, based on this understanding, and this was associated with the possibilities that were made available to them in the place which they reside. Junior, in the following extract, discussed his discovery of enjoyment for rugby.

Junior:	Just do something you like. If you like something then you've just got to do it.
Interviewer:	So is it – I suppose we've talked about how you kind of come across rugby so you found the thing that you like?
Junior:	Yeah, if you like something do it, or like go and just find something that you like (309-313).

Following Junior's discovery that he liked and enjoyed rugby, these sporting experiences began to matter to him a great deal and so were sought after by him. The impact of this process for Junior was significant and led to him advising others to do the same. His enjoyment had led to a motivation and commitment to his discovery, and he attempted to mobilise others to discover and explore the thing that matters to them. Based on this discovery of an ability and enjoyment of sport, Junior looked ahead to the future and spoke about wanting to play rugby professionally, using this to shape his career aspirations generally when he said *"if I don't make it professional then obviously get a job, but right now I don't really know what I want, I think I want – want to be a PE teacher, I like sports"* (line 518-519). Other participants also described using this developing knowledge about themselves in the present to inform their day-to-day lives and the decisions they make, with the aim of achieving a wanted future. At, in the following extract, spoke about taking engineering at school due to his interest in this, and the career he wished to pursue based on this interest in the future.

Interviewer:	What do you like about engineering?
At:	Taking parts of it all and stuff like that apart and cars and putting them back together.
Interviewer:	Okay. So what do you like about that? What's good about that?
At:	I'm just interested in being a mechanic, and engineering and all that (42-45).

At chose to take engineering due to his enjoyment of what this included. He used this knowledge to guide him toward what was important to him, and he put effort into the activities

in his current life which helped him to think about and move toward a wanted future. Other participants also described the importance of putting effort in and giving due consideration in the present, as they felt that the decisions they currently made could impact the future. No Pseudonym, in the following extract, discussed his past and future in relation to the image of his life story book.

> No Pseudonym: It sort of is difficult because it brings out everything that's ever happened in the past and that but I mean there again I just look back at it now and I just, I just don't care about it. And I get on with it, I get on with my actual life in the future.
> Interviewer: And so it, it matters to you about the future?
> No Pseudonym: Mmhhmm
> Interviewer: OK can you tell me any more about that?
> No Pseudonym: It tells you who you are, the future, I mean you know everything happens every day and everything happens so quickly I mean everything happens like you can't really judge it all what's going to happen but I mean the future decisions make the, affect the future of your future I mean the past it's just all in the past (776-788).

Through focusing on the future, No Pseudonym described attempting to define himself and the life that he would like to have, and to move towards becoming this, rather than focusing on the part of his life story which had already been told and could not be edited. He felt that the decisions he currently made were important in achieving this future, and experienced these moments and decisions of importance as presenting themselves spontaneously and without warning. This led to an experience of pressure to get it right, in order to acquire the future that he wished for and to become the person that he wished to be. This conscious consideration of their development and progression toward the future was evident for other participants, with a want to move from a less preferred situation, in which they struggled to relate to people and their place, towards a wanted present and future. Some participants wanted to move away from their past memories and experiences, which were still a source of difficulty for them. Through discovering their strengths and interests, and moving forwards through hard work and motivation to develop, participants attempted to move away from the remnants and difficulties from their past. Junior discussed his commitment to rugby, in the following extract, and spoke about the need for effort in order to reach his goals.

> Junior: I think just if you don't work hard then you don't get anywhere do you, so…you work hard and then do better things for yourself. I've always like said that to myself if I work hard, get you know, get better results (226-228).

Through working hard, Junior moderated his difficult feelings and did 'better things' and this led to him having an understanding of himself as able to achieve. This ability to impact on his own successes in life led to him having an experience in which he was the driver and navigator in his life story. This process then further motivated Junior towards being more committed to achieving his goals, and led to further exploration to understand his abilities and potential further, and *"to see what I can do"* (Junior, 248). Another aspect of the participants getting to know themselves which related to the theme of '(In)visibility and Being (un)seen,

(un)heard, and (mis)understood' was the way they used the feedback from others in order to help them recognise areas of their life in which they were doing well or have an interest or strength in. When discussing what the image of his rugby badge told me about him, Junior discussed the recognition of his ability and effort and how this had led to him progressing in rugby.

> Junior: It tells me that – I suppose it tells me how I work hard, cause like within them three years I worked hard; I trained hard, showed what I could do in games and yeah, getting fine scholarship and everything. I played for District as well, so just shows that like the things I like I work hard for. The things I want as well. (221-225).

Junior 'showed' others what he was able to do and this was seen and recognised, and led to him progressing in his area of interest. His effort was rewarded by recognition, feedback, and financial reward. This further contributed to his sense of control over the outcomes in his life, and the linear relationship he had formed between effort and results. Though moving forward and progressing, like Junior, other participants described interpersonal goals, such as a want to become more accepted and wanted by those around them, with being seen and heard for their achievements and progress being important in this. No Pseudonym spoke, in the following, about a want to keep his life story private and what he believes others should notice and see in him instead.

> No Pseudonym: Because you don't want people knowing who you are, what you've done, because it's not the past you judge them for it's the future. That's about it (743-745).

No Pseudonym's interview frequently returned to the judgement and his feelings of being judged by others. He was concerned others would see him for the way he was previously, and not see the attempts he made to show himself more favourably. A focus on the future, however, provided hope for him that if he was able to become the person he wished to, that this would become noticed and seen and his past, where he experienced the most painful judgements, would be unseen.

For some participants, there was an internalisation of interests, activities, the parts of their life that they do or do not enjoy, and the way that they interact with the world. Through this, participants described learning about themselves and who they were. Participants had begun to explore and attribute internal characteristics to themselves based upon the experiences in their present place, and undertaking the opportunities available to them. Melissa described, in the following extract, how she thought her dog would describe her based on the relationship and care she provided to her.

> Melissa: If she could talk she would say Melissa's a very nice gentle girl, she doesn't hurt me, she gives me lots of water when I need some and she gives me cuddles when I just get fed up so when she goes hummm, like erm and I normally have a laugh with her (700-704).

Melissa viewed herself as gentle and nice in the eyes of her dog, and as able to recognise and meet the physical and emotional needs of another. The opportunity to provide

care had enabled her to see herself as someone who could provide gentle care and not 'hurt' others. Tyreasha also thought she was *"understanding"* (line 305) due to her being caring toward her cat *"when she's been down when she's been told off for killing an animal in the garden she's literally come, come up to me and laid on my lap, like to say I'm upset"* (line 306-307). Other participants, however, appeared to describe much of their world more externally. These participants navigated their lives based upon what they like and dislike, with internal reflection being less apparent in their interviews. When encouraged to use their reflective capacity, participants such as Junior, Mr Popper, and At, struggled to speak about their internal view of themselves and how others may perceived them. The following extract provided an example of this, as Mr Popper discussed her photograph of her dog, and what it was about animals that she liked.

Interviewer: What is it about animals that you like?
Mr Popper: Um... I don't know, it's just I've always like them I haven't really thought about why but.
Interviewer: Okay that's cool. So how come you decided to take a picture of Norman then?
Mr Popper: Because...I don't really know.
Interviewer: You don't know? What did you want to tell me?
Mr Popper: That I like animals (766-771).

Mr Popper's understanding of herself was limited to her likes and dislikes. She had spent time discovering and had an understanding of the 'I' in relation to 'I like animals' but appeared to struggle with questions about what this said about herself as she had not explored why. It may be for Mr Popper, like others who struggled with this, that attempted exploration of this was a novel area for them, as they had not internalised or explored a view of themselves based on their experiences and interactions within the world. These participants seemed to navigate their lives based on a view of themselves which was externally located in the things which they do, enjoy and succeed in - or the converse.

Through developing a knowledge of the self, whether internally represented or more externally linked like the above, participants discussed how they had used this knowledge about themselves to create an environment and relationships in which they optimally functioned. When participants were able to control and influence their environments, participants felt that this assisted them to cope with their life and their associated feelings, both from the past and in the present. No Pseudonym, in the following extract, shared how his knowledge about himself helped him to function on a day-to-day basis.

No Pseudonym: Yeah, yeah if some, if something happens I want to be in control of that. You know I just like, I don't necessarily need it all the time but it makes me feel better, it makes me feel miles better and more good about myself, 'cos I've got that control and I've got that power to stop anything when I want (517-520).

Through developing a knowledge of himself as a person who prefers to be in control, No Pseudonym was able to navigate his life in a way that moderated the difficult feelings that

were associated with a lack of knowledge and control. He could not have control 'all the time' and coped with this, however this knowledge about himself motivated him to recognise opportunities within his place for control, and to maximise these opportunities so he felt 'better'. No Pseudonym benefitted from an approach in which things were done with him, rather than done to him, as the 'power' to control his environment can only be achieved if those in his place listen to him, and allow him some influence over his life. The experience of control for No Pseudonym was a result of the place and the opportunities for power and control being present for him.

When considering getting to know themselves, participants described feeling lucky and fortunate due to the opportunities they had in their current situations. Participants discussed having an awareness of the possible alternative situation had they been moved to a different place with different people and possibilities, and felt concerned about how their lives and themselves could have been. This led to Tyreasha discussing that she felt *"lucky for where I am now"* (line 135) as if she had not *"moved to this foster placement I'd never have moved to this school and I would never have met such an amazing family and like what they are capable of"* (line 146-149). Whilst participants, therefore, expressed an internal drive and motivation to discover themselves and become who they wanted to be, there was also an awareness of the external influences on this, and that part of their lives has been out of their control. The importance of external context and the place and possibilities where they resided led to participants discussing a fragile view of themselves and their future. Mr Pseudonym discussed, within the next extract, his current school and the plan for him to remain there until he exited education.

No Pseudonym:	I am there and I'm staying there until I like get leave and erm yeah do you know I'm actually there and not somewhere else. It's better.
Interviewer:	Can you explain that a bit more for me about why it's important that you're there.
No Pseudonym:	I mean if I wasn't there I'd be, I'd be, I'd have totally different people to meet, I'd have totally different friends, I'd have, I wouldn't, I don't think like I'd sort of be diff, I think I'd be different but not a massive different. Sort of like my personality and that and the way I am but yeah (862-871).

No Pseudonym believed if he was to move placements, he would possibly lose who he was, as the people and possibilities that impact on the person he was becoming would not be there. Such fragility in their view of themselves may be particularly marked for those participants whose understanding of themselves was more externally linked and was embedded in the place and possibilities in which they resided, rather than internalised characteristics which they perceived as having moved with them to a new place.

Box 2: Unique experience of a wanted future/past

One participant, Melissa, described a unique relationship with the past, present, and future compared to the other participants. This has been included as whilst under the main

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theme, it represented a different experience of a wanted future, compared to the other five participants, which was of interest. Melissa, like other participants, described a clear wanted future, but this represented a return to a past situation, to be with her birth siblings and her biological family. Melissa, in the following extract, was discussing the adoption of her younger sister and what this meant.

> Melissa: Adoption is like mmm going to a new mum and a new dad and a new family until she's about 18 or even more I don't know what age and they can find their own family so their birth family so. For instance my sister will be finding me or I can find her or basically her family can find her or whatever happens (114-118).

Melissa's vision of her future involved her and her sister being together again, and it seemed she saw her present situation as a wait for this, with the future involving her family reuniting once they were old enough. Melissa's approach to navigation toward the future therefore included an attempt to maintain relationships with absent family with whom she had no contact, and to return to her life as it was before she became looked-after. This was different from the way other participants were navigating toward a goal in their future, which required them to put in effort to progress in an identified direction. Melissa's goal required her to wait and maintain relationships as they were, through attempting to not progress and move on. The loss of a sibling was not seen as a permanent situation, and so Melissa's effort and commitment remained to being the best sibling she could be. Melissa discussed self-development and navigation toward a wanted future through an attempt to maintain and fulfil her role as an older sibling. The importance of self-development for Melissa, in the following extract, was focused on being due to the influence this will have on her sibling's development.

> Melissa: Yeah and he's kind of learning after me, learning with me as well as when I'm old enough or something when I leave like care or something he's got all that knowledge to grow up and be happy (763-766).

For Melissa there was a responsibility for her to have 'all that knowledge' in order for her brother to learn from her. In order for her brother to grow and be happy, she - as the older sibling - had to nurture and provide for him, with her goal for herself being intertwined with her goals for him. For Melissa, her siblings' discovery and success in their life were more prominently discussed than that for herself, as their outcomes and future were of great importance to Melissa and therefore underpinned the future that Melissa was attempting to navigate toward.

Figure 8. A photograph of a photo of my sister by Melissa.

Reflexive Box 9: Incorporating the visual into the interpretative process

Melissa's interview troubled the theme as during the first reading the focus appeared to be on the past and the lost relationship with her sister. Through considering the image of her sister in a photo frame alongside her interview, however, an understanding of Melissa's interview emerged which was about the present and future relationship with her sister. The photograph was as much a picture of her sister as also a representation of how she maintained the relationship with her sister and the feelings associated with the loss of her biological family. This reflection helped me understand Melissa's loss more deeply, as a partial loss in which her sister was part of her past and lost, but exists in her present and her hopes for the future. Melissa's photograph also helped me to understand the lack of discussion about distance and separation that was spoken about in the interview, as the photograph in a photo frame allowed Melissa to remain feeling connected and close, allowing her to relate to her sister.

Reflexive Box 10: Audience

During the interviews I became aware that the way some of the participants were speaking about their experiences was interesting as they did not appear to be only speaking to me. There were examples of participants responding as if they were speaking to others, and it seemed that they were considering the wider audience of the research. When Tyreasha was asked why she took a certain photograph she said *"I just wanted people to realise that…"* (line 667). Junior, when asked if he had anything additional to say about a photograph, replied in a way that appeared to be framing his response as a direct communication to others in his

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position when he said *"Just do something you like. If you like something then you've just got to do it"* (line 310). Based upon the way that the participants were responding, I began to consider who their perceived audience were and how they were engaging with this audience via the research process. The way the research was explained to participants was as a way of informing people about their experiences and learning more about what it was like to be looked-after so that this can be understood better. This set up an interaction which had the explicit aim of dissemination and communication; an example being when Tyreasha, during the interview, appeared to be talking through me and directly to her audience when she said *"Yeah erm because it just, it'll make Tom and other people recognise…"* (line 109). There were also examples of participants who were also using the interviews to 'speak back' (Luttrell, 2003; 2010) to the dominant narratives about looked-after young people. Such as when Tyreasha said *"and it will make other people think how erm erm lucky some people in foster care do actually try hard"* (line 676-678).

Participants had something to say and lessons from their experiences which they wished to share, and they seemed to be seizing the opportunity and treating the interview as a gateway to their audience. The young people had their own audiences in mind when talking about each photograph, with the research possibly being perceived by participants as allowing them to connect with, and be seen and heard by multiple audiences (Luttrell, 2010). This reflection led to my appreciation of the "seen and heard' theme deepening and I noticed an increased commitment within myself to write and attempt to publish this thesis. Participants had been told that they would have an audience and had shared what they had to say, however it had become my responsibility to then present that and complete the process of talking through me. This reflection also led to an increased emphasis on phenomenology, and keeping the themes close to the data and what participants had said, so to not 'voice over' the young people's perspective (Luttrell, 2010). Through becoming aware of this I was able to understand why I had initially struggled with the conceptual and interpretative aspects of the analyses and had initially undertaken more descriptive analyses.

5.2.7.1 Conclusion

'Getting to know myself' was used by participants to navigate both in the present and toward a wanted future. Participants spoke about the possibilities that they had seized as a result of being in their place, and the impact this had on their understanding of themselves. Through exploring who they were, participants formed ambitions for the future which assisted them in navigating the present and to pursue experiences which strengthened their understanding of who they were. The process of discovering themselves was related to becoming a person that they wanted others to see, and was dependant on being noticed by others so that the efforts they expended were recognised and therefore reinforced. Whilst individual goals and hopes differed,

through holding this understanding and being successful in these endeavours, it was described that a sense of themselves as capable and successful had begun to emerge.

5.3 Findings of Feedback Phase (Phase Three)

Following analysis, the researcher returned to participants to feedback the analytical outcomes, to ask participants about their experience of participating in the research and sought to hear their perspective on the results and how well they fit with them. The data from the meetings were used to contribute a perspective to the present study on the experiences of the participants in relation to their experience of participating in the research process. The procedure, which was outlined in the method chapter, will now be briefly restated.

Participants consented to take part in phase 3 of the research during the consent process of the main study; they were, however, approached again post-analysis and asked if they still wanted to take part in the feedback stage of the research. Five participants agreed to take part, and all chose to be interviewed at their home. During the feedback meeting, the aims of the meeting were explained and the participants completed a new consent form, which involved them consenting to the discussions being audio-recorded. The meeting began with the researcher telling participants what the research had found, followed by an interview about the research process and the findings (see Appendix 12 for topic guide). The feedback sessions lasted between 22 and 34 minutes (*M* = 29 minutes*)*.

At, who brought his interview to an end after finding it difficult, chose not to take part and so received his feedback from the research via post. At was communicated with via his foster carer who said they had spoken to him about the feedback phase over a number of days but he was sure he did not want to participate.

Observations and descriptive comments based upon these feedback meetings will now be offered, based upon the learning aims of this phase which were outlined in the Method chapter.

5.3.1 Experience of hearing the findings and these being fed back

Following hearing the findings of the research, participants spoke about their initial thoughts and reactions to what had been found. On hearing the results of the analysis, participants shared that they were surprised that other young people felt the same as them. This was described as bringing relief and reassurance, as they were not alone and in reality other young people in care have similar experience to them; *"like they feel like similar so I know like I'm not the only one that feels like that"* (Mr Popper, 23-24). In the following extract, No Pseudonym spoke about how hearing the findings reduced his feelings of being "alone":

> No Pseudonym: It's actually relieving to know that you've got some other people, some other people out there that's actually just like you, just the same as you

and going through the same things with you, cause then if feels like you're not alone. It feels like you can talk to other people more about other things (27-30).

For No Pseudonym, the results provided a feeling of connection with others around him, with the findings motivating him to perhaps be more open about his experiences. A concern of the researcher prior to the feedback session was what it would be like for participants to hear findings that whilst including their narratives, may also not fit with their experiences. Participants, however, did not speak about this and instead expressed that the results fit with their experiences well, and that they were surprised to hear about how research including five other young people had found themes which sounded similar to their personal experience. This led to positive feelings being reported by participants, with Mr Popper stating *"It's just good to know I'm not the only one that feels like that"* (line 35). Tyreasha in the following extract spoke about what it was like to hear the feedback and know it came from research with six young people.

> Tyreasha: It sounds like it all came from me really because like, it were like all the experiences that people have put into the interviews have come from my point of view. It sounded really good (17-19).

For Tyreasha she identified very closely with the findings, and this led to her believing that others experienced their context in a similar way to her. Whilst participants described the findings generally fitting well with them, they also spoke about parts of the findings that were particularly pertinent for them. For instance when asked if any parts of the findings particularly fitted with their experience, Mr Popper said "*The trying to get some quiet time by myself and the animals*" (line 15) was salient to her, whilst Melissa said *"The dog part. That part because I do talk to my dog"* (line 254).

Participants spoke about how seeing the results following the analysis made them feel listened to and understood, and that they were pleased with the results of the analysis. Participants also did not state any of the themes did not fit with their experiences, with everyone suggesting that all of the themes felt relevant to them. Though this may have been connected with a want to please the researcher and so during this interaction participants may have felt unable to express anything negative, and experienced a pressure to agree with the findings. Participants, however, did not just state that they agreed with the findings, and instead felt that the process of hearing the feedback had positively impacted on them. In the following extract, No Pseudonym reflected upon hearing the findings of the research.

> No Pseudonym: it's actually good that you've been listened to, you know what I mean? It's a good feeling to know that what you've actually said has actually gone into consideration and someone has actually put the time and typed it up and listened to you, and they've actually understood what you've said, so I mean that's nice to know (3-6).

Some participants spoke about being pleased that they had found out what the results of the analysis were. Tyreasha said she was surprised that what she had said and the photographs she had taken had been used, as she thought other young people would have said better things and taken better photographs. In relation to the photographs for the research she said *"my photos are me and like theirs might have been like better quality and stuff like that"* (line 176-177). No Pseudonym also spoke about the importance of the feedback session and finding out how their contribution was used, and described that the feedback process had led to positive feelings associated with seeing the results of his participation.

> No Pseudonym: It's actually nice 'cause you know you've actually, because I actually took the time to take the photos and they've actually been used instead of them not being used and just being a waste of my time but to see them actually gone on paper and going to be used in some research it's made me feel better (140-143).

5.3.2 Experience of taking part

A number of participants stated they were initially wary as the research began. Whilst the method had involved the social worker gaining the consent of the young people for the researcher to attend and undertake the initial meeting, participants spoke about not knowing that the researcher was coming to visit or what this was about. When Tyreasha was asked what it was like to be approached for the research she responded *"It was like – sort of like a shock because I didn't really found out about until like you obviously came and explained it all to me so it was kind of like a shock"* (41-42). This led to them being initially unsure about the researcher, and requiring some time to settle in to the research as *"just at first like, first encounter of it like, that were hard, like obviously as it went on it became easier"* (Junior, 121-122). Participants, however, described that they were glad that they decided to partake in the research, and thought it had been a good process for them. For example, No Pseudonym spoke about his experience of the research in the following extract:

> No Pseudonym: Yeah, I were just a bit wary of you know, what to say, what the answers would be, you know what kind of questions would be asked. I mean after doing the research I thought they were all reasonable questions you know, so I felt comfortable (62-65).

Some participants described that they had found the interview to be difficult initially, due to being unsure what would be asked of them and a perceived expectation to talk about personal information and to know what to say for each image. Junior and No Pseudonym said that as the interview progressed they became more comfortable, particularly as the interview schedule involved similar questions for each image and so participants became aware of the questions that would be asked. Junior, for instance, said the following when considering the questions in relation to each photograph, "*Yeah, I think like once you talked about one photo like you know more or less what to talk about so the second photo and the third photo etcetera,*

gets easier" (129-130). He then suggested that knowing the questions that were likely to be asked, perhaps by showing them at the beginning of the interview, may have assisted him to become more quickly become comfortable with the interview.

Another aspect to taking part in the research that was spoken about was that some participants enjoy contributing and being involved in projects such as the present study. Participants, however, described that they had found it difficult to get involved in the past, and that *"not many people have asked me to take part in anything"* (Mr Popper, line 48). In the following extract, Tyreasha shared her experience of volunteering to take part in activities but this not being followed up:

> Tyreasha: I just felt like I was – I got included in something that I wanted to do. Like because sometimes for the council and stuff I don't really get included like I put my name down and everything and they've chosen like five completely different people (89-91).

Whilst participants, such as Tyreasha, spoke about participation positively, it was also acknowledged that the process had involved talking about difficult and *"it's like the personal things. I mean things in here it's like delving into someone's like personal life"* (No Pseudonym, 52-53). Two participants, Melissa and Tyreasha spoke about how they had felt upset immediately after the interview, due to the content of what was discussed. They both, however, stated that they had coped with their emotions similarly to how they described coping with similar situations during the main interview. For instance Tyreasha sought some space and had some time to process her emotions following the interview and then had re-joined her foster family, and Melissa said *"I just went to look at pictures and then had a cup of tea and I were fine"* (line 350). When asked if she spoke to anyone or sought support in relation to her distress, Melissa stated *"the dog"* (line 354) and *"the dog cuddled me"* (line 356). No participants spoke about ongoing upset, or seeking additional support following their participation in the research.

The majority of participants said that they had not thought about the research since the interview, and that they had not noticed any thoughts, feelings or a change in behaviour that had occurred as a result of it. No Pseudonym, conversely, stated that taking part had been enjoyable and had led to him having a greater understanding of himself and why certain objects or activities were important to him. He stated in the following extract, for instance, when he had used his earphones since the interview he had taken a moment to reflect why he had chosen to do so at that time, and that this insight had allowed him to *"now properly processing stuff about why I'm using it and it's just made me feel better"* (line 153-154).

> No Pseudonym: I mean there's a few times where I've just picked up my earphones or something like that and looked at it and think "Oh right, that's why I'm using them right now." It's clicked with me and I've understood why myself now so that's made me feel so much better about it (90-93).

5.3.3 Experience of photo-elicitation

When considering the photo-elicitation process, participants spoke about how they felt the photo task was good as it allowed them to consider in advance what they would like to take pictures of, and that it was good to have the choice about this. Junior specifically discussed, in the following extract, that he appreciated this choice as it meant he could control what was spoke about in the interview:

> Junior: Just like you got your choice about what you wanted to talk about. I mean like you didn't get like a question to like, like you didn't ask me or talk about this, I picked it myself so yeah it were just good getting your own choice really (98-100).

Participants spoke about the photographs being useful during the interview as they acted as a cue to ensure that participants spoke about all that was important to them, *"having them there you know, made me remember"* (No Pseudonym, 129-130). The incorporation of photographs into the interview was also described as positive as it led to a discussion between participant and the researcher which was paced by the young person; this process was described by Tyreasha as *"better than I expected. I just thought it would be like one massive recording thing stuck in the middle of the table and you're firing questions at me left, right and centre"* (line 67-69). Tyreasha also felt that the photographs provided her with structure during the interview and kept her on topic and assisted her to manage her emotions through giving a focus, as she explained in the following extract:

> Tyreasha: If I hadn't have had the photos with me I would have practically just broken down and waffled on about any old nonsense but it was actually alright because I could talk about them picture by picture and I just really enjoyed it (148-150).

Participants described being pleased that the research had used their images as part of the feedback session. Participants expressed no issue with not all of their images being used, and stated they understood that a range of images from a range of participants had been chosen for the feedback meeting. None of Mr Popper's photographs were included and she stated she was *"not bothered to be honest"* (line 144), however unlike others she did not get to experience the positive emotions reported as associated with the inclusion of their photographs, such as when Melissa said *"wow, it were like wow"* (line 485) and ended the interview by saying taking part made her *"like really proud and I'm really happy with myself"* (line 523).

Tyreasha took the opportunity of the feedback meeting to remove consent to use one of her images, the photograph of her foster dad, as she did not want his face being published so people could associate him with her. This was to protect him and her foster mum, as she was *"worried about like their safety and stuff like that"* (line 196) from having the photographs publically available. Tyreasha said, *"I did actually have second thoughts about the photo but I just thought I'd tell you that when next time you came"* (244-245). She had decided quite

quickly after the interview she did not want this photograph used and had thought about that since, but she had not contacted me and instead used the feedback session to inform me.

5.3.4 Conclusion

The feedback phase provided an insight into the experiences of young people when they participated in a photo-elicitation research study, and what it is like for a young person to hear the findings of research that they have taken part in. The impact of hearing the findings appeared to be positive for participants, and removed some of the uncertainty about what had happened to their contribution. It also was reported as leading to participants describing that they felt they may be more similar to others who were looked-after, which reduced their feelings of being 'alone'. Participants described that the findings represented their experiences well and resonated with them. Whilst a pressure to comply with the researcher's interpretations during the interviews was acknowledged, the feedback phase appeared to support the assertion that the analysis was of a good quality.

Showing how their narratives had been used seemed to communicate to participants that their contribution had been important to the findings of the research. Participants reported having a positive experience of being involved, with some of them reporting that they had gained a greater understanding of themselves. Whilst the research involved discussions of personal and sensitive material, which had been distressing at the time for some participants, this had not had a long-lasting effect for those who were involved in the feedback phase. Participants instead reported that they had not really considered the research, and so the feedback phase had been important in the research process for them and completed the participation cycle.

The present study aimed to offer a unique contribution to the literature through conducting an exploratory study with looked-after young people. It sought to empower participants to introduce what was important to them through the use of a participant-led, creative methodology. In the final chapter of this thesis the discussion will begin by considering the findings in response to the set research question 'What is important to looked-after young people during adolescence?'. This will involve considering the findings alongside the literature discussed in the literature review (chapter 2) as well as considering novel theoretical areas based on the data gathered from participants. Through allowing the data and the subsequent interpretations of it to guide the discussion, the experiences of participants will remain central. The participant-led and photo-elicitation elements of the methodology will also be considered, with the aim of evaluating their application in the context of research with looked-after young people. A quality assessment of this study will then be offered, followed by a discussion of the recognised limitations of this research. The clinical implications of the research will then be considered with the aim of further informing how looked-after young people can be supported based upon the narratives of participants. Finally, the chapter will conclude with considering directions for future research.

6.1 Summary of Findings: What is important to looked-after young people during adolescence?

Based upon the analysis of the interviews and visual data generated by participants, using IPA and a complementary visual analysis, a single core theme of 'Place and Possibility: Finding a way' was generated. Within the core theme five main themes were generated to offer a conceptual understanding of the participants' data: '(In)visibility and being (un)seen, (un)heard and (mis)understood'; 'Being a part of the place and being with others'; 'Getting away and finding space'; 'The importance of animals as a second soul'; and 'Getting to know myself'.

The primary experience of participants was the situated nature of their life and development within the foster placement they resided, with this place and the associated possibilities influencing who they were, how they coped, and what they believed they would become. Place for participants was wider than physical location and referred to a systemic, social world. Based upon the possibilities and opportunities in their place, participants adapted and found a way to cope with the difficult parts of their lives. Through asking participants what was important to them currently, participant narratives were temporally situated in the present, with reference to how they were moving forward to the future and away from the past.

Participants spoke about the importance of being seen, heard, and understood in their lives, and the impact that this had both on how they coped with their experiences but also on

their sense of themselves as important, worthwhile, and visible to others, with the converse of feeling invisible and unimportant being true. Being a part of their place and being with others was important to participants, with feeling unseen and unheard undermining the feelings of connection and inclusion that participants valued. When participants experienced this connection, this helped them to cope with their experiences and to feel 'free' from the emotional and psychological burden of their experiences. The ability to 'get away' was used by participants to manage aspects of their lives that were overwhelming, and to cope with the demands of their place, it was also used to keep aspects of their experiences hidden through managing these in a separate space.

Place and possibilities for participants related both to the foster family context and the wider community in which they were embedded, with some experience of connection and relationships of importance being outside of the home. Within their homes, animals were described as important to participants. Through their relationships with animals, reciprocal feelings of acceptance, support, care, and compassion were described. When moving to their 'place', participants had been introduced to animals which went on to become an important component of the ways they found to navigate their lives, with this care and connection enabling participants to feel able to cope with life outside their homes. Participants described, over their time in their place, developing a knowledge about themselves and how this was being used to progress from their past, and to advance themselves in their present and future.

The results of the analysis will now be considered in relation to the existing literature to consider how it can be understood by and contribute to it. Firstly by considering adolescence.

6.2 Adolescence and Development

The thesis began by discussing the theoretical understanding of adolescence, comparing normative theories of development with those that view development as more situated. Now the data will be explored in relation to the ideas of development-in-context followed by an exploration of the data in relation to discussions about identity and the self.

6.2.1 Development in context

6.2.1.1 Developmental Contextualism

When describing what was important to them, participants frequently discussed their experiences as situated and in relation to their place. The sense of who they were, and the developments that they have achieved since they moved to their place, were attributed to being within that specific context, as a result of their experiences there. Developmental contextualism (Lerner & Kaufmann, 1985; Lerner, 1991), as discussed in the literature review, appeared well placed to understand these narratives and the development of looked-after young people in adolescence. This framework emphasises the importance of the interaction between the young

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person and the social world at both a familial and societal level, rather than development being an individualistic, internal process. Participants described the impact they perceived their context and the people within their context have had upon them. Moving to their current context was described by a number of participants as transformative, and leading to change that they could not have foreseen due to aspects of the specific place and its possibilities that were beyond their comprehension before they were there.

Looked-after young people have always experienced at least one move from living with primary carers (Jack, 2008). Within their interviews participants discussed what an alternative reality might have been if they had been placed elsewhere. Their current place is, therefore, important to them and provided a sense of stability; of being rooted. Stability through experiencing fewer placement moves has been described by other looked-after young people as important and underpinning being 'successful' whilst being looked-after (Happer, McCreadie, & Aldgate, 2006). Those who had experienced many moves also described valuing stability in place and people, even though they often had not experienced this themselves (Happer et al., 2006). Research, however, shows the chance of a foster placement being long term is relatively low (Triseliotis, 2002), with less than one in eight young people, across seven local authorities, remaining in their placement for greater than four years (Baker, Gibbs, Sinclair, & Wilson, 2000). Looked-after young people have been shown to be continually aware of this potential instability and the possibility of further placement moves, which leads to worry about the unknown and what might happen next (Triseliotis, 2002). Based on the findings of this research, these unknowns could include not only where they will be, but who they will be and what they will become. This instability, however, places looked-after young people in a difficult position, as they may feel powerless about decisions pertaining to future moves or could feel *"destructively powerful"* (p. 263, Schofield & Beek, 2009) due to their ability to instigate further placement moves, for instance through difficult or unacceptable behaviour. Within the data of the present study participants did not discuss this explicitly, however, participants commented on their fear of being unwanted and not liked if they were to not appear and show an acceptable version of themselves. Place has been described in the literature as bringing participants a sense of belonging, with this assisting them to develop themselves and find a sense of stability and security (Jack, 2008). In the present study, similarly, participants spoke about their experience of available and consistent relationships within their place, both in the home and the wider community, and the reassurance this provided them about their ability to manage.

Within the literature on developmental contextualism there is discussion of adolescents behaving in ways to elicit change in their environment, playing an active role in shaping their own development (Lerner & Kaufmann, 1985). This process was less apparent within this research, however, which may suggest that characteristics of the context and being a looked-after young person impacted on this process. Rather than attempting to modify their

environment to meet their needs, participants appeared to instead use escape, physically or internally, as a way of coping with an environment which remained unchanged. This was evidenced by participants' descriptions of space and the way it was related to helping to maintain relationships within their place, and ensuring stability of their context.

When participants could access separate and boundaried space, there were examples discussed of the ways that they were modifying their environments to meet their needs, suggesting active participation in their development may therefore be restricted to a part of their place. This space was usually them alone, or with an animal, which suggests participants may only feel comfortable to modify an environment in which there are no other people that will be affected.

Developmental contextualism (Lerner & Kaufmann, 1985) focuses attention on a young person's context as contributing to their development. It appeared for participants that the context of being looked-after added further complexity for this group. The processes through which development is theorised to occur, such as a dynamic relationship between environment and the young person, appeared to be moderated by an awareness of the possibility of a placement being unstable and therefore at risk of breakdown if looked-after young people pushed the boundaries too far. Developmental contextualism draws attention to the concept of goodness-of-fit, suggesting development is influenced by how well the needs of the young person matches their environment. Participants described using space to keep their experiences more hidden and private as a way of coping. It appeared that rather than descriptions of conflict and attempts to modify their environment to fit their needs, that participants tried to find ways to cope with their environment as it was and make it a better fit to their needs.

The Focal Model will now be explored, as a theory that was introduced in the literature review as potentially useful in understanding the development of young people during adolescence.

6.2.1.2 The Focal Model of Adolescent Development

The Focal Model (Coleman, 1974) theorises that young people navigate the multiple issues of adolescence through focusing individually on each task. When young people are forced to confront tasks simultaneously, and cope with more than a single issue at a time, it is suggested that problems can emerge and this can impact on development. When considering the participants' narratives, the young people did not describe experiencing life as a series of transitions, which included leaving events behind to focus on the next task. Participants instead discussed the ways they attempted to balance their interactions in the present both in their external and internal worlds, whilst managing the remnants of the past. The Focal Model (Coleman, 1974) and cumulative risk research (e.g. Evans, 2003) suggest that navigating multiple life events is associated with psychological distress and emotional dysregulation, and impacts negatively on development. As participants have to manage multiple stressors

simultaneously, it would be hypothesised that this led to development being more demanding in comparison to their peers. Participants therefore felt the need to escape or block out their external or internal world due to becoming overwhelmed, as described. This space may then allow looked-after young people to focus on the task of importance in the moment as they feel 'free' and released from the burden they experience. The use of internal and external space may therefore represent not only a coping mechanism in the moment for looked-after young people, but a mechanism that facilitates the ongoing development of looked-after young people.

6.2.1.3 Adolescent development as a transition to adulthood in the looked-after context

Adolescence is generally associated with a want for greater autonomy, with young people progressing toward the independence of adulthood and gradually becoming more autonomous, increasingly using peer relationships as secure base from which to explore the world (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005). Within developmental contexualism (Lerner & Kaufmann, 1985) this would be an example of the young person shaping their environment through exercising autonomy. Participants in the present study described feeling unheard and ignored, with a limited ability to be heard and to have any level of influence in their own lives. Any suggestion of the ability of participants to shape their development through making autonomous decisions, akin to their general population peers, may therefore be farfetched. This is similar to descriptions in the literature in which looked-after young people have described a lack of power and autonomy in their own lives due to having to wait for decisions to be made by adults on their behalf (Golding et al., 2006). When this was explored by McMurray et al. (2011) participants described this as leading to an experience of their development being *"on standby"*, due to having to wait for decisions to be made about their life before they can live it (p. 216).

The looked-after system is described theoretically as focusing on encouraging young people to become gradually more independent as they develop, to support the transition toward being a 'care-leaver' (Holland, 2009). Living independently, however, typically occurs earlier for this group, with the majority moving into independent living aged 16-18, whilst within the general population it is more typical to remain at home into a person's 20s (NICE, 2013; Stein, 2006). A third of young people aged 16-18 in 2013-14 left care prior to their 18th birthday, with many feeling they left care too early (National Audit Office, 2015). There is policy in the UK in place to support young people in care through delaying their transition to independence until they feel prepared. The 'Staying Put' initiative (HM Government, 2013) is in response to the average age of leaving home rising within the UK and aims to facilitate young people staying with their former foster carers after they are aged 18 years and until *"they are prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown"* (HM Government, 2013, p. 4). If participants, however, are unable to have influence and be heard within their own lives, the ability to make decisions and learn from the consequences within the safety of the foster

placement is reduced. For participants to feel 'prepared for adulthood', this would involve allowing them the opportunity, similar to their peers, to gradually develop toward exercising greater autonomy. The current system appears to limit the ability of participants to be heard and explore the consequences through making their own decisions. Young people are then expected to live independently and be autonomous, however the developmentally typical transition in this process of autonomy has not been supported. This may contribute to outcomes for care-leavers being poorer than their peers, for instance in 2013/14 of those who had recently left care and who were now 19 years old, 41% were not in education, employment or training compared with 15% for the general population (National Audit Office, 2015).

6.2.2 Self and Identity

Exploration of identity and the self have been suggested as a core task of adolescence within normative theories (e.g. Erikson, 1968). Some participants of the present study spoke extensively about their view of themselves, with a particular focus on their experiences in relation to others and the perceptions others hold about them. This was, however, not the case for all participants, with others being much more focused on their external experiences in the present and things that are important to them, with limited reference to themselves internally. It therefore appeared that identity formation was not equally focused upon by all participants as important, which supports longitudinal research suggesting that exploration of identity may not be a universal feature of adolescence which is experienced equally by all (Meeus, 2011). Although there is a need to be sensitive to the possibility that the research task and question may have steered participants to focus on the topics they chose and to represent themselves in the ways they did.

6.2.2.1 Looking glass self and internalisation

The looking glass self (Cooley, 1902) refers to the way a person imagines their self is viewed by others, and the feelings and attitude toward the self they believe other people experience. This is based upon three components: how we imagine we appear to another, our imagined judgement by that person of how we appear, and our feelings in relation to that. As we view the self in the eyes of another, like looking at ourselves in a looking glass, it is hypothesised that we consider how this fits with what we believe we should be like.

Internalisation refers to the process of integrating an internal self-concept with external behaviour. Internalisation occurs through the person understanding their behaviour as coming from themselves and being self-determined, with this behaviour being understood by individuals as representing who they are (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Tice, 1992). Participants in the present study described the importance of showing themselves in a certain way, appearing to be sensitive to the judgements of others, with the way they present themselves to others being experienced as becoming the person they are. These are examples of

how consideration of their looking glass self and subsequent internalisation, both of which are dependent on having the opportunity to be seen and noticed by others, assisted participants to develop a wanted sense of themselves. Research has shown that the process of showing oneself in a certain way leads to greater internalisation of these characteristics, compared to exhibiting them in private and these being unseen (Tice, 1992). Resultant changes in the individuals, through internalisation of these externally presented characteristics, were evident on both self-report and objective behavioural measures. Tice (1992) found that internalisation was greatest for those who evidenced that they closely monitor themselves and their presentation. This suggests that participants who were aware of themselves and the way they appeared to others could benefit from the opportunity to show and have their preferred version of themselves seen. The experience of having the wanted version of themselves seen may then lead to change in their experience of their internalised self so that the internal and external versions of themselves are coherent. The process of themselves being seen for who they want to be may therefore underpin a movement away from aspects of themselves which are unwanted and uncomfortable for them. Participants, however, described experiences of being not seen and feeling invisible, which may have had the consequence of limiting their ability to show and become the version of self which they wish to develop.

6.2.2.2 Self-in-context and multiple selves

Participants discussed their experience of themselves as differing across contexts, development of themselves over time, and an experience of themselves as different dependant on their emotional context. This appeared to suggest that participants therefore have an understanding of themselves as a self-in-context, with an experience of different selves across time and context. Rather than describing a core self which is a singular, observable internal reality, the participants' narratives are in line with the idea of multiple selves. Theories of multiple selves propose that the self varies across contexts and in relation to others, with people experiencing different aspects of themselves within a particular situation. Selves are therefore changeable and occur in relation to people, relationships, time, and contexts (Harter, 2012; Paré, 2013). This represents a shift from modern to a postmodern perspective about the self, and away from Erikson's (1968) conception of adolescence as a period of movement toward increased stability in the adolescent's sense of themselves.

There was evidence, however, of some participants at other times favouring the idea of a core version of themselves, describing an experience of a true or authentic self. Participants in the present study described multiple experiences of themselves, some of which were not liked and that they felt negatively toward. It appeared, however, that participants used the concept of a core self to manage these experiences, through experiencing the parts of themselves that were preferred as being the authentic self, and the other parts as not really them. Gergen (1991) was critical of the idea of multiple selves due to the possibility that the multiple selves do not

harmonise well. It appeared, though, for some participants that such a lack of harmony had enabled them to cope with having experiences of self which they did not like.

6.3 Findings in relation to Attachment theory and research

Attachment theory, originally proposed by Bowlby (1969), is a *"particularly relevant framework"* (p. 139, Stevenson & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2006) when considering the experiences of looked-after young people, as it is used to provide understanding of the effects of early adversity on development (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008). Attachment theory postulates that early experiences lead to people developing an internal working model of 'self' and 'other' in which, through multiple interactions between the young person and their caregiver, the caregiver provides a representation or 'working model' of the other which the young person carries into interactions with other people (Bowlby, 1973). These internal working models are a representational system which enables individuals to predict the availability of care and their carer, and to understand and control their interactions with people in the future (Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton & Munholland, 2008). Attachments in young people are typically categorised into four categories: secure, and three insecure subtypes, ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganised (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978; Main & Soloman, 1990). During adolescence young people are theorised to review their experiences of attachment relationships, due to increased cognitive capacity allowing these reflections, and their multiple working models which then coalesce and result in the adolescent possessing a state of mind in respect to their attachment (Hesse, 2008; Main, 1999).

A secure attachment style is theorised to develop through a young person having an experience of a caregiver that is consistent, available, and reliable enough to be supportive and nurturing (Bowlby, 1969; 1973). For securely attached individuals, relationships are understood as a place to get their needs met; the world is seen as predictable and safe, and the young person develops a sense of themselves as worthwhile and loveable (Golding & Hughes, 2012; Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 2008). This is their internal working model. Children that live in settings that do not meet their needs and involve inadequate care which is frequently insensitive, neglectful, abusive, or rejecting are theorised to develop an insecure attachment style (Golding, 2006). For these young people relationships are not understood by them as a place of safety in which the young person can get their needs met, because they were neglected or abused they may develop a sense of themselves as bad, worthless, or unlovable (Golding & Hughes, 2012). Research has shown the outcomes for those regarded as having a secure attachment are favourable compared to their peers with an insecure attachment (Fahlberg, 2012).

6.3.1 Attachment and the importance of animals

During adolescence, as young people develop cognitively and emotionally it is proposed an 'internalised attachment figure' or 'internalised secure base' develops which enables security in adolescence and adulthood, despite the possible absence of a current attachment figure in a person's life (Hesse, 2008; Main, 1999; Main, Hesse, & Kaplan, 2005). The process of talking, being heard and understood and this resulting in support being available was described by participants as reassuring. It appeared that participants had important relationships with both animals and people created the foundations for participants to cope in the present and future. The importance of the human caregiver and developing attachment security has been established and discussed at length in the literature on looked-after young people (e.g. Golding et al., 2006; Golding & Hughes, 2012). Pets and the importance of these relationships does not often feature in the literature on looked-after young people (Holland, 2009). The discussion of how experiences of care and support from animals enabled participants to feel able to cope, and these animals acting as an internalised secure base, is therefore more novel.

The way that participants described the relationship with their pets and the attentive, consistent, and predictable care experienced appeared similar to the care that underpins the development of secure relationships in infants. For instance, participants described an experience in which their pets were dependable and always available to meet their needs, through listening and being emotionally attuned with participants at times of distress. Research using measures of attachment in adults has found that relationships with animals were a source of attachment security, with the structure of the relationship being similar to that in a human to human relationship (Beck & Madresh, 2008; Kurdek, 2008). Kurdeck found whilst all attachment behaviours were present, it was the attachment behaviours of a secure base and proximity seeking which are most prominent. This is similar to the descriptions of participants that when they are distressed they return to spend time with their pets, through engaging closely with them. Behaviours described by participants such as stroking and cuddling, whilst not atypical ways to interact with a pet, also maintained close proximity.

When considering the relationship with a pet compared to that with human caregivers, Beck and Madresh (2008) found that there was a weak association between the ways participants related to their partners in comparison with their pets. This was used to theorise that a person's previous experiences which underpin their relationships with other people are not the same ones that underpin relationships with pets. Pets may therefore be a substitute, when required, in place of a human attachment (Sable, 1995). The relationship with pets may, therefore, have been important to participants as it enabled them to experience a level of attachment security which was difficult to experience with humans in their place, due to prior adverse experiences with people. It has been proposed that animals may be particularly well

placed as attachment figures for those who have an insecure attachment as there is a pre-verbal element to the interaction (Rynearson, 1978). The non-verbal components of the interactions have been theorised to enact the young person's pre-verbal need for care, through non-verbal acceptance from the pet, which was not met in their earlier life (Rynearson, 1978).

Pets were described in relation to the reciprocal physical affection in the relationship, with participants describing the comfort that such interactions could bring and the enjoyment they had of these affection-based interactions. Noonan (2008) suggests that pets provide an opportunity for physical intimacy and connection through *"touching, tickling, stroking, cuddling, talking and gazing with a pet"* (p. 399). Based on the study, pets appeared to allow looked-after young people to care, be cared for and to have physical contact with another. This physical contact appeared comparable to the comfort and reassurance an attachment figure is described as providing to a young person in the interactions which promote attachment security in early life (e.g. Golding, 2006).

Research has investigated the benefits of touch for enhancing attachment relationships, as a natural component of a parent-child attachment relationship (Golding, 2006). A lack of touch both in early life and in foster care or this being misunderstood, painful, or traumatic can lead to a looked-after young person's relationship with physical contact being complex (Golding, 2006). Pets may, however, provide a place where the young person has sufficient trust to allow the need for closeness to be met (Rynearson, 1978). This may be particularly important for looked-after young people as touch between foster carers and young people who live in foster care can be controversial and experienced as uncomfortable for carers (Golding, 2006). The participants' narratives in the present study involved no discussion of physical affection in relation to the people in their lives, with support being largely provided through talking with individuals rather than suggestion of a hug or other physical comfort. Pets and access to animals may therefore have provided an opportunity for participants to experience touch, as it may not have been accessible within their foster families.

6.4 Being a part of and belonging

Participants discussed their experiences of being a part of their place and being with others within it, and how this assisted them in coping with difficult experiences and to feel reassured that they will be able to cope in the future. Place for looked-after young people was greater than just about the foster family and the care they receive within their home and those relationships, and included their friends, school, and other parts of their wider system. All the participants were discussed the importance of a sense of inclusion with someone, however, for some participants there was less discussion of the importance of family, and instead the wider context was discussed. It appeared for these participants that they experienced a sense of belonging in another part of their system.

Attachment theory would suggest that descriptions of attachment security support a young person's feelings of safety and so enable autonomy and exploration, which is theorised as central to the social and emotional development of adolescence (Allen, 2008). Hart, Blincow, and Thomas (2007), however, suggest the concept of belonging can also be a useful adjutant to attachment theory when considering the importance of relationships for young people. Belonging is based upon the idea that humans need to feel a part of something and feel connected within a larger group of humans, and emphasises the wider context as a potential source part of these important relationships (Hart et al., 2007). Belonging moves away from the idea of an attachment figure with whom security originates from, instead suggesting that the need to belong can be met by a number of people, with the loss of a relationship being somewhat replaceable by a relationship with another person (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Belonging draws focus to the wider context, with participants of the present study discussing school and sports teams for instance, and a person's wider culture and geography (Hart et al., 2007). The belongingness hypothesis theorises that people have a drive to form and maintain long-term, important, positive relationships with others due to this enhancing survival through the protective qualities of being with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Belonging has been associated with supporting development and having the potential to be transformative through positive and caring relationships due to there being psychological and physical benefits to having a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; McAdam-Crisp, Aptekar, & Kironyo, 2005; McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005). Maslow (1954) proposed belonging as a basic human need which is essential within his hierarchy of needs model. Relationships that satisfy this need for belonging are theorised to have two components: frequent pleasant contact, which involves ongoing care and concern for each other's wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The positive effects that are associated with belonging are achieved when both components exist, with the latter explaining what makes these interactions of greater importance than contact with a stranger or acquaintance.

Through establishing feelings of belonging, participants of this study described having somewhere that was either a tangible or psychological support at times of distress or difficulty. A sense of belonging is theorised to reduce feelings of isolation, assisting individuals to understand where and how they fit in with others and to reduce their perception that they are alone (Hart et al., 2007). Once established, belonging is suggested to allow young people to cope with rejection and negative social experiences elsewhere due to the reassurance and safety belonging to their group provides (Hart et al., 2007). It has been suggested that belonging is particularly important for young people who are anxious or disorganised in their attachment relationships. A sense of belonging may therefore have allowed participants to experience feelings of safety, through being supported by being with others, which they do not experience elsewhere due to a lack of attachment security with a caregiver (Hart et al., 2007). Thus, the

concept of belonging provides context to the discussion of the importance of being a part of their place by participants in this research.

Participants described the importance of learning what they are good at and doing what matters. Through doing this, they had the opportunity to meet others who have similar interests to them and develop their wider context in their place. Undertaking these activities was described as participants developing their skills and being a part of something which provides feelings of belonging and companionship. Research has confirmed, for instance, that for ethnic minority groups playing sport as a member of a team led to feelings of belonging, supported development of team members' understanding of themselves, and provided a place of escape from their lives (e.g. Walseth, 2006). The belonging hypothesis suggests that the drive to belong leads to people putting effort in to maintain relationships, to avoid a loss of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Participants described finding what was important to them and then being committed to these activities, putting effort in to advance toward a wanted future. Part of this effort and commitment may be understood as due to a commitment to the relationships formed and an attempt to maintain the feelings of belonging that develop. Other participants, in contrast, spoke about struggling to maintain effort due to their effort not being noticed and seen. It is also possible that these activities, such as effort in school, due to lacking a social component were also less reinforced due to a lack of belonging as a secondary gain. It therefore appeared important that the activities participants were guided toward, if they required effort and commitment, included a social component and that participants were recognised for their efforts.

Belonging provides young people with an opportunity to feel accepted for who they are, what they are good at, and to feel positive about that (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Some participants, however, spoke about the need to show themselves in a certain way in order to be acceptable and therefore to belong. Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, and Collier (1992) described that belonging develops through a person feeling valued and needed, and perceiving that they fit with and complement their context. It seemed that participants felt that in order to belong they had to be a certain way, however being able to be genuine and authentic seemed to be less important than being accepted and belonging. It appeared that participants adapted their sense of themselves to fit their context, as this was the system in which they were placed and therefore needed to fit in order to belong. Based on Hagerty et al., if these participants did not feel valued for who they are, their sense of belonging may not be met. As previously discussed, though, participants described this accepted version of themselves becoming understood as who they are, both by themselves and others, which may have led them eventually feeling valued and meeting their need to belong.

6.5 Findings in relation to stigma literature and research

Participants spoke about the stigma of being looked-after and the possible perceptions that others have of them due to living in foster care, and the way this impacted on the view of them that others possessed. When considering belonging and feeling valued for who they are, the stigma attached to being looked-after may have impacted on their belief that they could belong as the young person that they were. Stigma includes groups being identified as different due to a distinguishing characteristic and devalued due to that difference (Dovidio, Major, & Crocker, 2000). Participants described similar negative perceptions of being a looked-after young person to those described in the literature, for instance being 'abnormal' and 'bad' (Kools, 1997).

A focus on difference was present, but not as prominent as described by Madigan et al. (2013) who, when asking about difference, discovered difference was a core theme. Participant narratives included an awareness of how their lives differed from that of others. The results of this analysis, however, were focused on how individuals managed the experience of being looked-after within their place. Participants described responding to the stigma and a possible negative view of them by focusing on developing the understanding others held about them as an individual. Participants did this through showing themselves as they wanted to be seen and sharing their true life story to reduce false speculation about them. This process was an example of the young people encouraging a view of themselves as individuals in their own right, which was proposed by Mills and Frost (2007) to reduce the effects of stigma. Through helping looked-after young people to be seen as individuals, it was proposed that this may reduce others using the group's stigma to understand individuals.

Pryor and Reeder (2011) propose a model of stigma which conceptualised four domains in which stigma can be exhibited. Two of these seem particularly useful when understanding the data, public stigma and self-stigma. Public stigma incorporates the above and describes the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions of society to people perceived as possessing a stigmatising condition or experience, in this case being looked-after. Self-stigma describes the social and psychological consequences of being part of a stigmatised group, including worries about how others may act toward you and possible internalisation of the negative societal views and feelings toward the group you belong to (Bos, Pryor, Reeder, & Stutterheim, 2013; Pryor & Reeder, 2011). Participants described wanting to represent themselves in a certain way to realign the view of themselves that others may possess. For some participants, this involved changing from the 'bad' and 'unacceptable' person that they believed they were, which may have been influenced through internalising stigma about the group and attributing it to a problem with themselves as individuals (Vojak, 2009).

Whilst some participants chose to be open with their life story to reduce the stigma-based assumptions about them, participants also contrasted this with a description of a want to keep their life story hidden and private. A want to keep their past hidden and private may partly

be due to this aspect of their life story connecting more obviously with their status of being looked-after and the associated stigma, whilst a focus on their success in the present challenges compensates for this stigmatised view (Bos et al., 2013). Participants described making positive changes from the way they were, and the importance of always presenting themselves correctly, with their being a perceived fragility of this better version of themselves due to the risk it could be lost. Within the stigma literature, such continued anxiety has been understood as due to the risk of getting their presentation of self 'wrong' and this connecting with the stigmatised view of an individual and thus being a supportive of a stigma-based understanding of the individual (Bos et al., 2013). The focus on presenting themselves well, described by participants, may therefore be a way of hiding the stigma and reducing the impact that people seeing the stigmatised version of themselves causes.

6.6 Conclusion of contribution of findings to extant literature

When asked what was important to them, participants spoke about their experiences in relation to their place, appearing to be undertaking development in relation to the possibilities and within the limitations of their place. Participants discussed the way that others may perceive them, and this appeared to relate to the stigma of being looked-after, however there was also discussion about the ways that participants related to themselves. Participants shared what they thought others thought of them, their looking-glass self (Cooley, 1902), and this appeared to include a want to move forward from a version of themselves which they no longer wanted to be. This was possibly based on a view of themselves informed by the stigma in society about being a looked-after young person. Participants held a view of themselves as being both varied and possessing multiple versions of themselves, whilst some participants described a preferred version of themselves which they wished to outwardly show their place. These processes depended on others seeing and hearing the young people, so that they felt visible and important, as well as having some agency within their own lives. A way that participants described having some control in their place was through their use of space. Escaping to space enabled participants to both keep part of their experience hidden and a wanted version of themselves seen, whilst assisting them to cope and moderate their internal experiences in a section of their environment in which they more generally struggled to shape to meet their needs.

The participants' narratives involved them sharing the importance of their pets, as a stable and dependable caring relationship alongside, but perhaps also in place of, relationships with other people. An important part of these relationships involved the participants being seen and heard, with this understanding providing an experience of care which may be carried into other aspects of their lives as a 'internalised secure base'. Relationships within the foster home were described as important, with a need to belong being of importance to the looked-after young people who participated. Participants spoke about different groups of people within their lives and the companionship this provided, as well as the importance of the possibilities they

have in developing a sense of themselves which is acceptable by others and assisted them to navigate toward a wanted future.

As a participant-led research design, the research was hopeful about its potential to provide participants with an experience of feeling important and empowered through being heard (Clark & Statham, 2005; McTaggart, 1994). The research aimed to empower participants through allowing the research process to be transparent and participant-led throughout, including post-analysis. The discussion will now move on to critiquing the methodology and how well it fitted the aims of the research and the needs of the participants. This will draw upon the main study, as well as the feedback phase, to centrally present participant reflections on the research process.

6.7 Examining the methodology in relation to the sample and research question

6.7.1 Participation and reflections on research process

This research completed the participation cycle by conducting a feedback session with participants. Participants reported that they felt heard and understood, and that they believed their participation had been worthwhile. Participants described an assumption that their contribution would have been of an inferior quality to their peers and so would have not been included, and participants were concerned what would be said about them and how they would be represented. These concerns were described as being alleviated through having the opportunity to hear the results. Such uncertainty about the outcomes of the research may have continued had the feedback session not occurred. It has been suggested that for young people to feel heard it is important for the outcomes of research and participation to be fed back (McLeod, 2007), this process is particularly strengthened if suggestions that have emerged from their participation are fed back (Fleming, 2013). The feedback session supported this assertion, as it appeared that for some participants that their involvement alone had not led to them feeling empowered and important. Through hearing the results, however, the participants could see and hear how their interview had been used, and the plans for the future of their data.

It appeared that whilst the method had been participatory in ethos, as participants were not involved in the analysis or write up of the research, following data collection increased power had returned to the researcher (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009). Participant experiences remained central throughout the IPA (e.g. Smith, et al., 2009), and so considerable power is retained through their data, however this period appeared to be experienced by participants as involving taking a passive, unknowing role in which they had to wait to hear about the research outcomes. As research does not always return to its participants (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009), these powerless feelings may be sustained by those who are involved in research and do not get any feedback.

When considering the possible issues and impact of not returning to participants to feedback the analysis of the research, it was important to moderate these concerns as participants were open that they had not really thought about the research, and if they had this consideration had been minimal. This had implications when considering the protectionist approach to research which involves limiting the participation of young people in order to protect them from harm and burden (Pinkney, 2011). Whilst some participants were distressed during the interviews and all participants discussed personal content that had the potential to distress them, ongoing distress was not reported and participants shared that the research had not had a negative impact upon them. The few participants that were distressed discussed 'getting away and finding space' following the interviews prior to re-joining their place soon after the interview. For participants talking about what is important to them, and considering their life, was reported as a pleasant and enjoyable process, with distressing topics being familiar to participants and consequently they were experienced in coping with this.

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Reflexive Box 11 – Feedback

When it came time to feedback the results to participants, I noticed in myself a draw to omit or modify part of the analysis within the feedback. This was due to my concerns about how participants would react to the analysis, which had been discussed in the literature as a common concern when feeding back results (e.g. Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). When I wrote the summary of the research I became aware of the prolonged time I was spending considering how I expected participants to react to each of the themes and how I could make them more digestible. I also became concerned about if it was okay to include their pictures or if they were too personal for participants. Through reflecting on this process I realised how disempowering this thought process had become, and how I had the potential to abuse the inherent power I currently had in relation to the presentation of the data. A thorough consent process had been agreed, and participants had consented to their images being used, deciding when the images were too personal to be included, with their social workers consenting where necessary. The photo-elicitation process had also led to participants having control over what they had brought and discussed in the interviews. A perceived vulnerability of the participants had momentarily taken precedence, however, with these concerns about harm having the potential to overpower their decision-making. This represented a protectionist approach (e.g. Pinkney, 2011) in which I had prioritised my opinion and disregarded the participant's ability to have choice.

This was an interesting reflective process, as during the research I had consistently held an understanding of the young people as having an opinion which should be listened to, but the ethic to do no harm had almost overpowered this. An ethic of care had emerged, in which I felt the participants required my care and protection (e.g. Holland, 2009). When participants had shared their narrative and given their photographs, it was with the informed assent that it would be used for research. The analysis was therefore presented to participants in full, alongside

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salient photographs, with participants reporting benefiting rather than being distressed by this process. Through completing the feedback interview, the strength of the participant group became obvious, with their ability to cope gaining further prominence. It was at this point that I realised I had been unknowing and powerless in some ways during the analysis, due to not knowing how the other half of the researcher-participant relationship were coping after the research. This may have then led to me reverting to imagining participants as vulnerable and being unsure how they would cope with hearing the analysis, which I was unable to 'know' until I returned and fed back the analysis as it was.

The interviews were composed of semi-structured questions that were used for each photo, leading to the routine of the interview questions having a cyclical motion, returning to the beginning of the interview guide for each photo with some unstructured exploration based upon what was said. Participants therefore became familiar with what would be asked of them, something that was reported as making the interview more comfortable for participants as it progressed, as a fear of possible difficult questions subsided. A suggestion that emerged through the feedback interview was to provide the participants with the questions that would be asked a few minutes prior to the interview. This was a novel idea, and illuminated that whilst the participants had some control over the overall topic discussed, due to the use of photo-elicitation allowing choice about what was introduced in the interview, through the use of questions the researcher retained the control over what exactly was asked. Taking a participant-led approach and considering power had allowed the researcher to intervene in the avenues where imbalances of power were recognised but, due to some of these remaining unseen, unconscious power differentials remained (Gallager, 2008; Lukes, 2004). Participants did not ask to know what the questions were in advance, and so the researcher remained unaware of the consequences of their actions, and how by not sharing the questions some participants may have interpreted this as a want for them not to be pre-known (Lukes, 2004). It therefore appeared that the potential of participant-led research to empower is limited by the boundaries of the researcher's conscious consideration. If research is to empower at its full potential, there is a need for supervision and reflection throughout the research process, with each step and action being considered in depth and drawing on the experiences of previous projects with young people.

Thought was given to the process to allow participants increased choice and control, as the consultation group were clear that having choices was important to them. There was the opportunity to pick interview locations, and to have an adult companion in the room, however all participants chose to be interviewed at home, alone. Research has suggested that whilst individuals prefer to have choice, the act of exerting choice is associated with causing anxiety and stress and can be problematic (Schwartz, 2005). This research therefore may provide an example of participants valuing the importance of having choice, but finding it too difficult to

exert that choice. Schwartz (2005) suggests that participants may benefit if we were to eliminate choice; this however does not fit with what looked-after young people want, or a participatory ethos. It may therefore be important for research to consider alternative ways of offering choice more meaningfully, or to consider if any of the choices are a meaningful alternative. Assor, Kaplan, and Roth (2002) found that having choice was less important if none of the choices connected with participant values, interests, and goals. It therefore may have been that, with the choices available, staying at home rather than travelling to a separate place was the true preference of participants when balancing the options.

The theme '(In)visibility and Being (un)seen, (un)heard, and (mis)understood' indicated the importance to looked-after young people of being heard and seen. Facilitating this was a complex process, with it requiring a critical and inquisitive approach to research, in order to consider the effects of power within the system on looked-after young people's ability to be involved. Throughout the research process there were examples of the way that the system operated undermining the choice, power, and control the young people could have. A number of young people discussed that they did not know the researcher was attending to meet with them prior to their arrival. Presumably the meeting had been arranged between the foster carer and social worker, and whilst the research may have been mentioned to participants, their understanding and consent to having an initial meeting appeared to be a murky process, rather than transparent.

The discussion will now consider photo-elicitation and the application of this technique in research with looked-after young people. This will lead to the consideration of participation and the participant-led ethos of the methodology, as this method was chosen partly due to the choice and control it affords participants.

6.7.2 Photo Elicitation and the interviews

Photo elicitation is described as providing more control to participants in an attempt to reduce the power differential in the researcher-participant, adult-child interactions within the research process (McLeod, 2007; Packard, 2008). This assertion was confirmed during the feedback interviews, as some participants described such control over the interview as a positive of the photography task and having the photographs present. It was described as reassuring to know that they could choose what was and was not talked about. Based on the results of this research and what was important to participants to contextualise this feedback, photo-elicitation may have also had the advantages of allowing participants to moderate how much was shared with the researcher, to keep aspects of themselves and their past fully or partially hidden, and to present a certain version of themselves during the research. The use of images also appeared to be important due to this facilitating participants showing, rather than solely talking about, themselves in a certain way, with the process of sharing photographs taking a 'seeing is believing' role. Croghan et al. (2008) discuss the way participants used photographs to validate

what is said within a research interview, with participants of this research similarly discussing the importance to them of being able to represent and include the contents of their images in the research.

The ability to control the interview process was demonstrated clearly by a participant who terminated their interview early. They chose not to talk about a photo, positioning it as the final image in their set and then stopping the interview prior to that image. Whilst the participant appeared to struggle with the interview, they had continued talking about their other images. Through positioning this image at the end of the set they kept this topic out of the discussion, having the choice and control to not begin to talk about these topics through ending the interview prior to this image being discussed. Whilst a feedback interview was not completed with this participant, this process can be predicted to have provided an experience of being heard and their choice and control respected, through an ability to recognise and exert their power over an adult (Gallagher, 2008).

Photo-elicitation has been used with young people to explore a diverse range of experiences. This research demonstrated the ability of looked-after young people to engage with the photography task, seeking no support from the researcher following the initial task setting meeting. Participants during the interview used their images in different ways, some more symbolically to represent something for them whilst others spoke about the content of the images more literally. This demonstrates the approach is flexible in enabling young people to talk about what is important to them. A further use of the images was as a cue, which then sometimes led to exploration of other areas reflecting a symbolic and literal use of the image. Participants described the way the images had allowed them to talk about the things that were important to them, through acting as a prompt which is an advantage of photo-elicitation due to the increased range of information available to the young person (Darbyshire et al., 2005). The inclusion of photography in the interview gave participants a point of reference in the interview which appeared to support participants to speak at length about topics of importance to them. All of the fully completed interviews were more than 45 minutes, which is within the upper range of the average interview lengths of 20-60 minutes reported by Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008) based on a review of literature on interviews in healthcare. Participants also spoke about how the photographs assisted them to structure their narratives, providing them with something in which to ground their responses. The photographs therefore not only acted as a shared focus between the researcher and participant, but appear to assist participants to retain their focus in their narratives also.

Through asking participants about anything that they could not photograph, Hodgetts et al. (2007) propose this leads to a more thorough understanding of participant experiences through opening the conversation up to aspects of their life which may be missing or inaccessible during the photography task. This approach was successful in the present study in

generating conversations with participants about topics which had not featured elsewhere in the research interviews. Participants, however, took control of this process themselves through symbolically representing concepts using what was available, but also through taking photographs of photographs to represent things that were unavailable. These images allowed participants to communicate about the person or object of importance the photograph represented, and also had the concurrent function of allowing a conversation about how that the photo or object in the photograph was used. These images therefore came with increased depth in the meaning that was described by participants, reflecting the ability of images to have multiple meanings to participants (Harper, 2002; Lapenta, 2011). Some participants also introduced physical objects into the interviews, suggesting that the opportunity to introduce and control what is important through photography generalised more widely. Together this indicated the way the opportunities provided by the photo-elicitation and participant-led methodology were seized by participants, allowing them to be active in their participation and how the research interview progressed.

6.7.2.1 Limitations of photo-elicitation

There was a theoretical rationale put forward for the advantages of photo-elicitation, which included a discussion of why it was important to present the photographs alongside the verbal data. An apparent ethical conflict appeared to exist, however, as the use of photo-elicitation appeared to have a disadvantage of quieten aspects of the participants' lives. Participants described wanting to talk about people who were important to them but they had chosen not to photograph due to the consent process for featuring people in photographs. Asking about other, not photographed, areas of importance at the end of the interviews allowed these to be introduced into the interview, however, these were explored in less depth to that which was photographed. The incorporation of the visual into the interview appeared, therefore to have precluded full integration of certain people and topics into the interview.

Although participants brought their photographs to the interviews, it appeared that participants had not always considered what they wanted to say, with some struggling with the interviews. Photo-elicitation therefore appeared to allow participants to set the topic of interest to them, however for some participants further exploration of this continued to be problematic. The methodology, whilst being theorised to lead to both more data and data of a deeper nature (Harper, 2002; Rose, 2012) appeared to be limited by the ability of participants to reflect and to answer the questions in relation to the photographs. Participants were at times repetitive in some of their responses, which may suggest that whilst the question was seeking more information that participants returned to the core concept of what they wanted the photograph to represent, possibly due to difficulty reflecting on the image at a greater depth. The research interview was also reported as involving considering the photographs in ways that participants had not anticipated. At the feedback stage these novel reflections were said to have been beneficial due

to the new understanding gained, however some participants visibly struggled with this process. In addition, it was due to the multiple and unexpected questions that one participant stated they wanted to terminate their interview, due to the depth about each photograph that the interview encouraged. Packard (2008) documented similar observations with homeless men, attributing this to an uncertainty and lack of confidence talking about the topic of interest. This again suggested that participants may benefit from having some time to briefly prepare prior to the interview, and away from the pressure of being recorded and talking in the moment.

6.7.1.2 Reflections on visual gems

This research took a novel approach to the use of the visual as part of the photo-elicitation process and incorporated the visual data more centrally in the analysis, alongside the verbal data. Photo-elicitation research typically uses the photographs taken by participants to underpin the research interview, but then little is done with this data (Rose, 2012). At most, research may present the data alongside the verbal extracts as a way of communicating with the reader (Rose, 2012), the relationship with the image and the resonance of the image is then left for the reader to experience. This is problematic as images have multivocality, an ability to communicate multiple meanings (Banks, 2001), and so the reader may not take from the image that which the participant offered and the researcher interpreted. Through incorporating the visual into the analysis, and presenting the meaning taken from these, it is proposed that the present study moved from prioritising the reader's experience of the visual, and re-centralised the participant and researcher's co-construction of the image.

The use of the visual as gems which illuminated the analysis fitted well with the process of IPA. The images which resonated with the researcher and brought further understanding were used to understand parts of the data as well as the group data as a whole, as in the hermeneutic circle of IPA (Smith et al., 2009). The process undertaken with the visual data was evidently interpretative, with the researcher introducing their experience of the image into the analysis. This could have prioritised the understanding of the researcher, however through grounding these reflections in the verbal data of the participants, the visual analysis remained close to the data whilst bringing additional factors that the verbal alone could not bring (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Barthes (1981) introduced affect into visual analysis through suggesting that images can usefully assist understanding through communicating interpretative insights in an emotionally stimulating way. The process used in this research was experienced by the researcher as enhancing their affective understanding of the verbal data, rather than altering the content of what was said by the participants. The potential of photographs to connect emotively with a viewer promoted reflection by the researcher, with an increased strength in the interpretations of the data being experienced. This fitted within an IPA framework, as interpretations are generally used to explore the thoughts and emotions of the participants (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). The visual was

experienced as advancing the analysis, through the researcher taking a 'phenomenological mode' (Harper, 1988) in relation to the visual data. This involved the photographs adding to the analysis through connecting with personal meaning and experiences for the researcher, guided by the narrative of the participant to ensure interpretations remained based upon the intent and meaning of the participants (Harper, 1988; Kaplan, Lewis, & Mumba, 2007).

6.7.3 Conclusions of examination of the methodology

When participants were provided with opportunity and a way to meaningfully share what is important to them, this research demonstrated that looked-after young people have an opinion which they want to share. The process was not without issue, however, with both the participant-led and photo-elicitation methods being evaluated as having some limitations. This was supportive of the stance that participant-led research and participatory practice need to take a participatory ethos to all elements of their process, rather than participation being facilitated simply by young people being present and asked their opinion or the use of particular techniques (e.g. Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). The quality of the research will now be considered, followed by a discussion of the methodological limitations of the research more generally. The discussion will then finish with the clinical implications of the research.

6.8 Quality Check

As discussed in the method chapter, this thesis assessed quality using the guidelines outlined by Elliott et al. (1999), the following section will outline this assessment under the headings proposed by Elliott et al.

6.8.1 Owning one's perspective

It is suggested that researchers should specify their assumptions and theoretical stance throughout the research process. Within this research, time was spent completing a reflexive diary to explore the relationship between the researcher and the research process. The inclusion of reflexive boxes within the thesis aimed to make transparent the researcher's position and the ways the research had both impacted on the fore-structures of the research and the prior knowledge had impacted on the research. The study justification, literature review, and methodology sections of the thesis, in addition, outlined the research and researcher's stance on childhood, participation, and research with young people, attempting to be transparent and justified in the stance taken.

6.8.2 Situating the sample

Elliott et al. (1999) suggest research should describe participants and their context so the reader is able to consider to whom the research may be relevant. Within the results section pen portraits were used to give context to the understanding of participants and to ensure

participants remained central in the research. This was with the aim of allowing the reader to achieve a deeper understanding of the data and to think about applicability to their context or area of interest.

6.8.3 Grounding in examples

Elliott et al. (1999) suggest that research should provide extracts so the reader can appraise the connection between the data and the interpretations given, through providing an example of the analytic process. Extracts were provided throughout the analysis section, so to keep interpretation and analysis close to what was said by participants. Photographs were also provided as it was believed that this provided a greater level of understanding and detail to the reader than presentation of words alone. An example page of analysis was also offered to evidence the process undertaken (Appendix 10).

6.8.4 Providing credibility checks

It is suggested that consideration should be given to the credibility of the themes provided within an analysis, and that this can be assessed through a range of credibility checks. There were multiple credibility checks employed as part of this research. Regular research supervision was undertaken with each theme being discussed at length, with both verbal and visual data being used to facilitate this discussion. The analysis also underwent a number of iterations to ensure the data was sufficiently interrogated, whilst themes and interpretations remained close to the data and the participant's experiences. The feedback session with participants was also used as a form of credibility check, a 'member check' (Elliott et al., 1999), as it included the opportunity for participants to feedback if they though a theme did not match with their experience.

6.8.5 Coherence

This criterion requires the data to fit together well to form an understandable structure to represent the experience explored, whilst preserving a representation of the nuances in the data. The use of diagrams is employed to attempt to clearly outline the structure of the subordinate theme and the themes that emerged through the IPA analysis. The themes were explored in research supervision, and through this a further theme was eliminated due to it lacking coherence as independent from a similar theme, which eventually encompassed it. Time was spent to name themes in a way that captured the core concept of what the theme attempted to express, balancing being suitably sophisticated with being clear and understandable.

6.8.6 Accomplishing general vs. specific research tasks

This research aimed to undertake an analysis of specific experience within a specific context, Elliott et al. (1999) therefore call for this to be done in a comprehensive manner in

order to achieve this understanding. The research attempted to remain attentive to the group from which it came, and it is therefore relevant to, recognising its greatest applicability as within the community from which it was sampled. The reader is provided with sufficient detail, however, to consider what they could take from the research, with an avoidance of any aims that are greater than the research could fulfil.

6.8.7 Resonating with readers

This criterion demands that the reporting of the research resonates with the reader and leads to an increased understanding or appreciation for the reader of the area of interest. The researcher had discussions with the research team, their peers, and also non-psychologists after they had read the analysis. This involved them commenting on their reaction to it and how it made them feel, to explore the resonance the analysis provided. When an area was found to not work for the reader a discussion was had and, where appropriate, adaptations made. Through discussion with participants during the feedback session, the research also considered how the data resonated with their lived experience. Participants provided feedback on the impact of the data and how they related to it, which then became part of the final thesis.

The present study, therefore, appeared to fulfil each of the criteria proposed by Elliott et al. (1999) and so it is believed it is of a good quality. The research, however, was not without limitation, and so to be transparent, areas of methodological limitation will now be explored.

6.9 Methodological limitations

The research attempted to offer looked-after young people aged 13-16 from the local authority sample the opportunity to take part in the research through having brief inclusion/exclusion criteria, outlined in the method chapter, and asking social workers to consider all on their caseloads who are eligible. An initial feasibility check for the research considered the amount of young people in the age range and found there were 125 looked-after young people who are 10-15 and 56 who are 16-18 in the area from which the sample was recruited. The research however struggled with recruitment of its six participants, with many social workers stating they did not have young people on their caseload who were appropriate for the research. As participants were 16 and under, the local authority held legal responsibility for them and their social workers acted as the gatekeepers who controlled access to the young people. Gatekeepers have the ability exercise significant power in the facilitation or prevention of a researcher-participant relationship forming (Emmel, Hughes, Greenhalgh & Sales, 2007). Through further exploration, it appeared social workers had a number of young people who met the criteria but were deemed inappropriate, or it was said that they would not be 'good' at the research. These potential participants were therefore not approached and provided with the opportunity to take part as the gate to them was closed. In addition, four of the six participants were or had been members of the participation group for looked-after young people within the

local authority, suggesting that these young people had previously been highlighted as appropriate for participatory projects and as possibly being 'good' at this. This appeared to suggest that social workers approached may have had a perception of the sort of young people that should be put forward for participatory projects.

Reflexive Box 12: 'Good' participants

In discussion with my field supervisor we considered whether social workers were only suggesting young people who would be 'good' at the research as a way of protecting me from young people who may respond negatively to me or be hard to engage. This may also have been to avoid either the young person, social worker, or myself wasting our time. The research, however, wanted to attempt to hear what was important to looked-after young people, and approached the population with an understanding that due to their experiences of people not being trustworthy may have been hard to engage. It was hoped the participant-led and creative methodology may assist those who struggle to engage with typical participation work to consider the research, but unfortunately the potential of that opportunity did not appear to overcome the perceptions of their social workers, as gatekeepers, that it would be unsuccessful.

A way that the research could have been modified to address this may have been to communicate the hope the researcher had for the potential of the methodology, as well as the awareness that it could take many sessions to build enough of a rapport to engage in the research. Photo-elicitation has been successfully used in other research with groups which are reported as struggling to engage in typical research interactions, such as homeless men (Packard, 2008), with the need to build a sufficient relationship to facilitate this being acknowledged.

Emmel, et al. (2007) draws attention to trust within the relationship between gatekeeper and participant, which was an area that was not considered by the present study. It is suggested that the sufficient level of trust required for a gatekeeper to facilitate a researcher and young person meeting emerges out of trust existing in the relationship between the gatekeeper and participant. If there is not a relationship of trust between gatekeeper toward the participant, Emmel et al. suggest that gatekeepers may feel unable to allow access to the participant due to a concern about how the research interaction will develop. It is possible, therefore, that the research accessed a biased selection of young people who were relatively similar and that due to a lack of trust only participants who were 'good' were put forward and this then provided a limited aperture on the experiences of the population as a whole. Participants, for instance, may have represented the experiences of those who are doing most 'okay' in care and were coping at a level that allows them to not only participate, but to be 'good' at it. This meant that the experiences of other young people, which may have been different, were not heard.

The feedback interview provided a fuller understanding of participants' experience of the research, after time had elapsed to allow reflection. There was agreement between participants who completed the feedback stage about their positive experience of the research and the research process. Unfortunately not all participants completed the feedback interview, with the participant who chose not to take part also being the participant who had chosen to terminate their research interview early. The research is therefore limited in its ability to comment on the experiences of a participant who appeared to have a more difficult experience of research and participation. It is likely, however, that this less positive experience and a lack of feedback undermined the ability of the process to empower and allow the participant to feel they were heard fully (McLeod, 2007; Tregeagle & Mason, 2008).

Not only may the sample reflect the experiences of those who are doing 'okay' in care, and feedback from those who had a more positive experience of participation, it is also a relatively small sample. Qualitative research using IPA aims to recruit small samples in order to conduct a thorough, in-depth analysis on the data (Smith et al., 2009). A limitation of this approach, however, is the ability to generalise data generated from a small sample, and to generate findings which can be generalised from a sample to a larger population, with these findings being enduring and largely context free (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The findings of this research are not able to do this. The present study, however, did not aim to do this and instead aimed to generate the opposite through considering the impact of context within an exploration of the particular. Lincoln and Guba proposed 'fittingness' as a useful alternative to generalisability, in which the similarity between a reader's context and the research context is considered in order to assess the applicability and utility of the findings. This is described as empirical generalisability, which is the ability of research findings to be applied outside of the context and the individuals sampled (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). It requires the researcher to contextualise the analysis so that the reader has the knowledge about both the context of the research and the context of the reader in their assessment of the transferability. A second type of generalisability is theoretical generalisability (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003) which refers to the ability of research to contribute to and extend the extant literature. It is proposed this research has achieved both empirical and theoretical generalisability, through exploring a methodology and a research question which is relatively novel and contributes to the literature, with a clearly-defined participant group.

6.10 Clinical implications

6.10.1 Feelings of isolation and being alone

During the feedback phase participants commented that they were surprised to hear that: other young people felt similar to them; were having a comparable experience to them; and spoke about similar topics of importance as them. This indicated that participants typically may

have felt disconnected, alone, and different to others. They however reported that seeing the results and their similarities with other young people led to feelings of comfort and reassurance. When considering the participants' lack of awareness about the similar experiences of others, this seemed to be related to the topics discussed being of a personal nature but also lack of opportunity for such discussion. For instance, a number of participants attended, or had formerly, attended the participation group for looked-after young people, and so had contact with others in care. Whilst this group allowed contact with other young people, the group was task-led and open discussion of the type of material the research elicited was limited. It appeared that contact between looked-after young people did not necessarily facilitate conversations which reduced these feelings of isolation and otherness.

The present study therefore indicated the possible benefits of finding a way for the experiences of looked-after young people to be communicated with other looked-after young people. Through sharing the experience of looked-after young people with others in care, it would be hoped that this would increase feelings of inclusion, being a part of a wider group, and bring reassurance that they are not so alone and different. Through developing this shared knowledge, this may increase the sense of belonging in looked-after young people, providing them with a group identity which allows them to deal with difficulties within their life (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hart et al., 2007). This has been shown to be the case in minority ethnic groups, in which having a sense of belonging equipped people to manage the stigma and discrimination experienced in wider society (e.g. McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005). It may also help looked-after young people to progress from an individualistic attribution of stigma toward seeing themselves as a part of a wider group who are unfairly stigmatised (Vojak, 2009).

A potential way of sharing this information may be through a booklet which outlines the lived experiences of other looked-after young people. This is similar to the narrative therapy approach of sharing 'insider knowledge' based upon the narratives of those who have had a similar experience with individuals currently undertaking that experience (Morgan, 2000). When taken to a group level, the assumption is that within the group there is knowledge and skills that are useful to other group members but are currently unknown or invisible to the wider group (White, 2003). This would have the additional benefit of the contributors feeling heard, seen and visible, which was reported by participants as important to them. It would also concurrently make the knowledge and ideas that are currently invisible to other looked-after young people shared and visible to the wider group (White, 2003).

6.10.2 Importance of pets

It is important for professionals to recognise the importance of pets for looked-after young people and the ways they support young people through reducing feelings of loneliness, providing comfort and care through their availability and consistency, and also providing a role and purpose. They also appeared to have a role in the participants' need for relationships and

attachment security (Sable, 1995). In work with looked-after young people, including therapeutic work, conversations should be encouraged about the pets in the young people's lives. Sable (1995) suggested it is the responsibility of the professionals to facilitate this due to a possible reluctance to share the level of importance an animal holds due to embarrassment or worry about their significant feelings in relation to their pet. This is important as the loss of a pet, through death or a placement move, could symbolise the loss of an attachment figure and the associated grief and mourning experienced may be significant (Sable, 1995). Through having these types of conversation with young people about their pets, Rynearson (1978) proposed a deeper level of understanding by the individual about their feelings may emerge. In addition, it may also open up further conversations about attachment, emotions, and unresolved grief and loss.

6.10.3 Being a part of their place, attachment, and belonging

Participants spoke about the importance of being a part of their place and the support and care experienced in relationships as a result of this. Developing attachment security and a sense of belonging have both been associated with positive outcomes and psychological benefits for young people (e.g. Allen, Porter, McFarland, Marsh, & McElhaney, 2005; Fahlberg, 2012). It may, therefore, be important that looked-after young people are supported to develop this sense of belonging with others, particularly as having a secure attachment is supportive of a strong sense of belonging (Hart et al., 2007). Developing a relationship, however, typically takes reciprocity and so is difficult for a withdrawn or distressed young person who may be more difficult to attune with (Hart et al., 2007). Looked-after young people can fear the connection that reciprocity and relationships with others bring because of their early experiences. Foster carers and the other adults around the young person may need to work to develop the young person's sense of belonging and attachment, finding a way to make the relationship work prior to the young person being able to do this with others who are less accommodating. This is important as the need for belonging was described by participants, and a struggle to establish positive relationships can lead to young people meeting their need for belonging through accessing less positive groups, such as gangs and those undertaking criminal behaviour (Hart, et al., 2007; McAdam-Crisp et al., 2005). Support to develop a greater range of positive relationships is theorised to assist young people to engage in further positive relationships, and to moderate the influence of contact with less positive individuals (Hart et al., 2007).

The attachment system is founded on a balance between exploration and feelings of safety (Allen, 2008), with exploration being reduced if a need for safety is not met. A quest for autonomy is held as central to these changes in the attachment system, with a secure attachment assisting with the balance between autonomy and retaining support during difficult experiences (Fraley & Davis, 1997). Whilst participants discussed experiences of being open and feeling

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supported, there were also examples of participants escaping to space and using accepting animals to process their emotions, rather than using the supportive relationships in their place to manage these experiences. Participants attempted to be self-sufficient, to hide their emotions due to fears of rejection. This may indicate that these young people found it difficult to feel that relationships are safe enough to be able to contain their difficulties (Golding & Hughes, 2012). Looked-after young people in foster care, however, live within a family setting which, when successful, has the potential to be transformative (Fisher, 2015). Foster care has the potential to provide young people with the prospect of experiencing consistent care and having their needs met, and therefore support the development of attachment security (Golding, 2006).

Young people who have experienced early adversity can be challenging to support and care for, with the number of placements that a young person has experienced negatively contributing to this (Fisher, 2015; Newton et al., 2000). The participants in the present study spoke about the importance of belonging, being heard and understood, and feeling accepted, with foster carers being the obvious resource to provide this. Therapeutic interventions and foster carer training programmes which are based on developing safe relationships between young people and their carer have been developed to help support looked-after young people to nurture these feelings of safety. These interventions aim to assist the young people to move from self-protection to being open and supported as a basis for exploration of their world (Golding & Hughes, 2012; Phillips, 2013). These include approaches such as PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy; Golding & Hughes, 2012) and the Nurturing Attachments group (Golding, 2014). Approaches based upon PACE have been shown to positively impact on outcomes for young people (e.g. Becker-Weidman, 2006; Becker-Weidman & Hughes, 2008), however these are a therapeutic interventions and not parenting as usual and so foster carers cannot be expected to do this unsupported and without training.

6.10.4 Developing a sense of themselves

Some participants struggled to think about themselves and described a limited sense of an internalised version of themselves. It has been suggested that difficulties with an individual's sense of themselves is associated with increased mental health difficulties in adolescence and adulthood. These difficulties are more common in those who have experienced early adversity and who are looked-after (e.g. Ford, et al., 2007; Meltzer et al., 2003), and research has suggested that developing an understanding of themselves can be integral to improvement in individuals with prolonged mental health difficulties (Davidson & Strauss, 1992). The process of looked-after young people developing a greater understanding of themselves could be supported by those around them. When participants who struggled with this internalisation described themselves based upon how others saw them, this was grounded in what they had been directly told. In order for looked-after young people to develop a positive sense of themselves, through their looking glass self (Cooley, 1902), it may be important that the adults

in their life make explicit their implicit experiences of the young person. Through introducing these in explicit conversations about the positive characteristics they see in the young person, those who struggle to internalise may be supported in developing a more positive sense of themselves.

6.10.5 Life story work and keeping their past private

Life story work is a frequently used intervention with looked-after young people (Willis & Holland, 2009). Life story work aims to assist looked-after young people to develop an understanding of their past and present, and to contribute to their understanding about themselves through an increased understanding of their autobiographical life narrative (Cook-Cottone & Beck, 2007). Participants in this research, however, spoke about a focus on the present and future in an attempt to move away from thinking about themselves in the past. In addition, participants spoke about a want to keep information about themselves and their past more private and hidden, and to have more control over this information. Those who support looked-after young people may want to move toward an approach in which they assist the young people to understand how past events might explain some of their difficulties now. A greater focus, though, is indicated as a way of helping looked-after young people to understand how they can work towards shaping the future to develop their sense of agency. Participants reported life story work and conversations about the past can be challenging for this reason, which indicated the complexity of this practice and a need to consider boundaries, confidentiality, ownership, and most importantly consent with young people due to the nature of the process (McKeown, Clarke, & Repper, 2006). Together these have implications for the practice of life story work and indicate a need to proceed with this sensitively and for this to be guided by the young people. A greater focus on life story work as an process which occurs both with foster carers and other professionals and is ongoing, rather than a book or time-limited intervention, may also assist the young people to feel empowered to pace the work. If carers are supported to develop an openness in regards to talking with the young person about their experiences then they may have the support that they want at a time which is better suited to them. Life story work tends to focus upon people (Jack, 2008), however this research also indicated the importance of place and the context they are within, as well as animals. Conversations should therefore be incorporated into life story work which prompt looked-after young people to speak about the places which have been significant to them (Jack, 2008). The approach needs to position the young person as an active participant rather than passive recipient in the process (Baynes, 2008). It is important that young people are invited to take part, rather than required to as part of a service standard, and the process responds to their need to stop or move on from a topic and is individualised in how it progresses (Baynes, 2008; Willis & Holland, 2009).

Whilst the present study has contributed to the extant literature, a need for further research is recognised in order to develop what has been found as important to looked-after young people further. These will now be explored, alongside suggestions of further research in relation to the methodology.

6.11 Implications for future research

The supportive relationship that pets provide looked-after young people is relatively unexplored in the literature (Holland, 2009). Research to investigate this relationship in more detail, to establish the outcomes for those who have access to a supportive pet, may provide a further insight into this. The benefits of pet ownership is discussed in the wider literature more generally, however research considering the effects of having a pet for those who are looked-after and/or have experienced early adversity should be an avenue of further exploration.

This research focused on the experiences of a group of looked-after young people whom were deemed appropriate and 'good' at participation, and this may have reflected a biased sample of the population and a limited range of experiences. A similar study in which young people who are coping less well in foster care and may exhibit behaviours which makes them less 'good' participants, as well as with those who are living in other care situations such as residential care, would complement this study. Practical limitations of the research also limited the ability to explore those in an out-of-area placement, which would also be an interesting sample to explore the experiences of. Through exploring a similar question the applicability of the findings for different groups of looked-after young people, and similarities and differences, may be established.

The potential utility of visual gems has been proposed by this thesis. Future research into photo-elicitation is required, however, to explore the claims made that this led to a deeper analysis and a different understanding of the data. Research comparing the experiences and data gathered by both those using the visual alongside the verbal data in the way outlined, with those analysing the verbal alone is required. Due to the interpretative nature of the analysis conducted on qualitative data this is a complex task, but one which is of worth in order to better understand the possible usefulness of the visual data that is sometimes gathered but left unexplored in photo-elicitation research projects.

Whilst the feedback interviews led to participants sharing their experiences and their subjective view of the impact of participation, there is limited research evidencing the outcomes of participation. There have been inferences that areas such as assertiveness, confidence, and self-esteem are positively impacted by participation; these claims would be strengthened if they could be supported by qualitative research. There was also an inability of this research to comment on the experiences of those who do not have such a positive participation experience; this would represent a useful area for further research to understand a wider range of

participatory experiences. Similarly the advantages of using a photo-elicitation methodology are largely grounded in the narratives and feedback of both participants and researchers. A quantitative research study investigating areas such as the depth, level of detail, topics of discussion and outcomes for participants following the use of a photo-elicitation methodology would act to strengthen the methodological claims of the technique.

6.10 Conclusions

This exploratory, participant-led, photo-elicitation research study explored what is important to six looked-after young people, aged 13-15 years, during adolescence. The research showed that when provided with an opportunity, looked-after young people engaged well with a research process and were able to reflect and talk about what was important to them at that current time. The experiences of the young people were closely linked to their context, with their development occurring in relation to the place and possibilities they were embedded within. Space, animals, being seen and heard, a part of their place and being with others, and getting to know themselves were all important to participants. Participants appeared to use these to find a way through their lives, focusing on the present and future, rather than the past that led to their looked-after experience beginning and the movement to their current place. This thesis included an emphasis on methodology, exploring novel ways of engaging with participants and using the visual as part of the analysis process and therefore was able to contribute to the extant literature beyond the topic of interest. An understanding of what was important to a group of looked-after young people was generated, with clinical implications providing some guidance about ways that what was generated through research with these young people could be heard and create participant-led change.

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Participant Information Sheet

Hi, my name is Tom. I'm training to be a clinical psychologist. This means working with people who would like support. I wanted to work in clinical psychology because I value learning about people's lives and their opinions about the world.

What is life like for you?

You are being invited to take part in a research project because I am interested in what life is like for you as a young person who is looked after. To help you decide whether to take part in this study it is important for you to read the information below, maybe discuss it with people you know, and ask any questions you want.

What is the aim of the research?

The research wants to get an understanding of what it is like to be a person aged 13-16 who is looked after. I am interested in what it is **about your life** which is important to you at the moment, or maybe what you would like people to understand better. In the past research has thought about what it might be like to be a young person who lives in foster care, but this has not really asked the young people what is going on for them. I think it is important to ask young people like you.

Why have I been asked to take part?

I would like to talk to people who are between 13-16 years old, and have been in foster care for more than a year. I asked all of the young people's social workers at Wakefield if they could think of people who fit this description. Your social worker told me that you might have the skills and qualities for this, so I hope you might want to take part.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is up to you to decide. You will be asked to sign a consent form, which means that you have understood the research and read this information sheet. After signing you can stop taking part in the research at any point, up to 1st April 2016 and any information you have provided can be destroyed. After this date, it will not be possible to withdraw your information as it will already have been recorded. If you decide **not to** participate, you do not have to give a reason for stopping.

What will happen to me if I take part?

As part of the research I want young people to take photos! If you decide to take part we will meet again and talk more about this so that you feel okay about what to do. Basically:

- You will meet with me
- I will give you a camera or ask you to use your phone to take photos to help me understand more about you and the things about your life that are important to you.
- ... help me to understand what is

- There will be 2-3 weeks to give you time to take photos.
- I will phone or text you after a week to check how you are getting on and to see if you have any questions you want to chat about.

- We will then meet again to talk (have a relaxed interview) about the photos that you have taken (e.g. why you wanted to take a particular photo? What you would like me to understand from that photo?).

You can have an adult of your choice (e.g. foster carer) with you in the interview, or you can do the interview on your own. If you choose to have an adult with you during the interviews they will have to sign a confidentiality agreement which means they will keep everything you and I talk about private.

There are a few choices of places that we can meet, either at the Caldervale social care offices, your home, or at the University of Leeds.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
I am interested in hearing about some things you want to share about your life. As there are things that I can learn from you that will make me a better psychologist. I want to share this learning with other professionals, such as clinical psychologists or people working in social care, and what I find may help to improve the support that services (e.g. social care) offer young people in the future. So if you take part you may be helping other young people in the future in a similar situation to you. It may also be quite fun to take part in the research and take the photos.

What are the possible downsides of taking part?
There might be times during the interview where you decide to talk about something that makes you feel uncomfortable or upset. If you begin to feel like this tell me. You are in control of what you choose to take photos of and what you talk about, you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to or answer any questions you don't want to. The interview can be stopped or put on hold and if after the interviews you want more support, we can sort that out. Plus you can change your mind about taking part, without having to say why.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
After a few months I will contact you to invite you to a feedback session with the other young people who took part in the project where we can talk about what it found. At no point will your personal interview be shown to them, we will only talk about general findings. You will have the chance to tell me what you thought of taking part in the study and if I have done a good job at understanding young people.

I will write the research up into a report and this will be checked by the University of Leeds to see how well I have done it (they are not checking what you have said in your interview). I will then share the results with people who could use them to make a difference, for instance other clinical psychologists or social workers. The results will also be fed back to teams like the looked after children's team of social workers. I may also put the research in professional publications and present it at conferences.

Is taking part confidential?
Confidentiality means that things you talk about with me are kept private and nobody except you and me would know what you have said. This research **does not** offer confidentiality because I would like to share some quotes from your interviews in order to help people understand what you tell me. Your real name will not be linked to these quotes as you will choose a fake name to use, and people will not know where you live or the names of people you talk about as they will also be given a fake name. It is possible though that you and what you say may be identified by people who know you and so a promise of confidentiality **cannot be** given.

I would also like to be able to use the photos that you take when I write about the research or present the research to other professionals. I think by putting the photos and what you say together

it will help me talk about what is important to you and other young people in the study. This means you may **not** be anonymous if some of the photos have things in them which identify you (like your face). If you are not happy for your photos to be used we can either blank out the faces in the photo or not use the photo at all. I will check all of this with you beforehand though to make sure you are happy.

There are certain times when the researchers cannot keep what you say private:
- If you report something that leads me to believe that you or somebody else is at significant risk of harm
- If you report criminal activity or criminal intentions.

In these situations I have to act in order to ensure your safety and the safety of others. Before doing this, I will tell you about my worries and we will discuss it together to agree on a plan of action. For example, this might involve talking with your social worker.

Will I be recorded?
I will record our interview on a small digital recorder so that I do not have to take lots of notes and the interview will be typed up by either me or a professional typist. This document will use your fake name throughout. Audio recordings from the interview will be stored on a password protected computer and will be kept safe. They will be destroyed when the research project is complete in September 2016.

So…I hope this has told you enough about the study to help you decide whether you would like to take part. I hope that you are interested as we really want to hear from young people like you. I will phone you in one week to check if you want to take part.

Please get in touch with me if you have any questions. You can email me, text me or call me if you would like to take part – I would love to hear from you!

Tom

Tom Matthews - Lead Researcher - Psychologist in Clinical Training
Doctorate in Clinical Psychology Programme, Charles Thackrah Building, University of Leeds, 101 Clarendon Road, Leeds, LS2 9LJ. Email: umfm@leeds.ac.uk ; Mobile: 07843998391
Remember, I can only answer this phone between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday for the time that you are involved in this study; if you send a text or leave a message I will ring you back.
Dr. Siobhan Hugh-Jones - Academic Supervisor - Associate Professor. Email: s.hugh-jones@leeds.ac.uk
Telephone: 0113 343 5744.**Dr. Alexandra Hardy** - Field Supervisor - Clinical Psychologist, Looked-After Children's Team Wakefield Local Authority. Email: Alexandra.Hardy@swyt.nhs.uk Telephone: 01924 327604 (available Wednesday – Friday).

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Title of Research: What is important to looked-after young people during adolescence? A qualitatively driven photo-elicitation study.
Researchers: Tom Matthews, Dr. Siobhan Hugh-Jones, and Dr. Alexandra Hardy

	Initial if consent
1. I have read and understand the information sheet which explains the research project.	
2. I have had the chance to ask questions.	
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without giving any reason up until 1st Sept 2015.	
4. Some photographs from the project will be in the final report, published, and presented, but I know that I can say at the interview if there are any photos that I do not wish to be used.	
5. I understand that my responses are not confidential (as written quotes from my interview will be used in the final report) but my real name will not be linked to them.	
6. I also understand that what I say may not be anonymous if is presented with images, especially if the images have information that easily identifies me (e.g. my face or my home) but my actual name will not be used.	
7. I agree that members of the research team can have access to my responses and I agree they can use them in research linked with this study.	
8. I agree to the interview with me being audio recorded so that what I say can be accurately typed up.	
9. I agree during the time between today and the interview that I will take photographs and bring them to the interview to be discussed.	
10. I agree to follow the guidelines about taking the photos so that I stay safe whilst doing the task and do not take inappropriate photos.	
11. I understand that if the researcher thinks something I say or show suggests that I or someone else is at risk of harm in some way that they may have to tell my allocated social worker or the police about this. This will always be discussed with me first.	
12. I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform Tom should my contact details change.	
13. I understand that there will be a feedback session in Nov/December 2015 for me to attend to find out what the research found and to talk about how I found taking part. During this meeting I consent to the researcher making notes about what happens, and understand these will be anonymous, as they will not be identified as being said by me.	

Name of participant   Date   Signature of young person

_____   _____   _____
Name of legal representative   Date   Signature of legal representative
_____   _____   _____
Lead researcher   Date   Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant
_____   _____   _____

Tom Matthews - Lead researcher - Psychologist in Clinical Training, umfm@leeds.ac.uk, Phone: 07843998391 **Dr. Siobhan Hugh-Jones** - Academic Supervisor - Associate Professor. Email: s.hugh-jones@leeds.ac.uk Telephone: 0113 343 5744 **Dr. Alexandra Hardy** - Field Supervisor - Clinical Psychologist, Looked-After Children's Team Wakefield Local Authority. Email: Alexandra.Hardy@swyt.nhs.uk Telephone: 01924 327604 (available Wednesday – Friday).

Photography Task Instructions

This sheet tells you about the photo exercise to help you remember what it is all about. There are no 'right' photos but it explains some things about what you can and can't take photos of. I know that one photo on its own won't be able to show everything, so remember you will have lots of time to explain to me why you took different pictures and what you hoped they would show.

I would like you to take photos of things that tell me:

What are the important things in your life at the moment?

I would like you to complete this exercise before our next meeting: _____. On that day, we will look at the photos you have taken and I will put a copy on my laptop, where they will be stored safely as it is password-protected and they will be in a hidden folder.

You CAN:
- ❖ Think about the important things for other people to understand about your life. You could think about what could be photographed and talk with other people about ideas that would help me understand better, maybe write a list.

- ❖ Take photos of things where you live (e.g. your bedroom or an important object).

- ❖ Take photos in public places where taking photos is safe (e.g. at school, or at an activity)

- ❖ Show something which I may not be able to understand until you tell me about the photos at the interview

- ❖ Take photos that represents something to you or says something for you. This may be something that is a symbol to you of something that is not in the photo.

- ❖ Take photos of yourself.

- ❖ Take photos of other people as long as they have signed a consent form. I will give you some of these and explain how to use them.

- ❖ Delete photos that you don't want me to see

You CANNOT:
- ❖ Take pictures that might be offensive, this includes pictures with sexual content and pictures which show disrespect to others.

- ❖ Take photos of other people, unless you have their written consent.

- ❖ Ask other people to complete the exercise – I want to know about you! Although other people can take a picture of you if you ask them to.

Other things to remember:
- ❖ I will text you in one week to check how you are getting on and to see if I can help in any way.

- ❖ Please be safe when you are taking photos – try not go places on your own that are unsafe and always tell somebody where you have gone. As I am hoping to learn about you and your life, I'd imagine that the photos would mainly be in places you normally are allowed to be.

- ❖ If the photos you take make me concerned that you or somebody else is at risk of being harmed we will have to talk about this. I might have to take further action to make sure that you and/or other people are safe.

When you have taken as many photos as you want to, you don't have to do anything with them as we will transfer them to the laptop on the day of our next meeting.
If you have lots of photos, pick the 5-8 which you'd like to talk about in our meeting.

Please get in touch with me if you have any other questions:
Tom Matthews - Lead Researcher - Psychologist in Clinical Training
Doctorate in Clinical Psychology Programme, Charles Thackrah Building, University of Leeds, 101 Clarendon Road, Leeds, LS2 9LJ. Email: umfm@leeds.ac.uk ; Mobile: 07843998391

Remember, I can only answer this phone between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday for the time that you are involved in this study; if you send a text or leave a message I will ring you back.
Dr. Siobhan Hugh-Jones - Academic Supervisor - Associate Professor. Email: s.hugh-jones@leeds.ac.uk
Telephone: 0113 343 5744 **Dr. Alexandra Hardy** - Field Supervisor - Clinical Psychologist, Looked-After Children's Team Wakefield Local Authority. Email: Alexandra.Hardy@swyt.nhs.uk Telephone: 01924 327604 (available Wednesday – Friday).

Appendix 4 - Initial ethics form decision

-----Original Message-----
From: Ethics.Committee@webhost02h.leeds.ac.uk
[mailto:Ethics.Committee@webhost02h.leeds.ac.uk]
Sent: 18 September 2015 11:33
To: Siobhan Hugh-Jones
Subject: Ethics form decision

Siobhan Hugh-Jones
Institute of Psychological Sciences
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT
18-Sep-2015

Dear Siobhan Hugh-Jones,

Title of study: What do looked-after young people want to better understand about themselves?
A qualitatively driven photo-elicitation study

Ethics reference: 15-0230

I am pleased to inform you that the above research application has been reviewed by the IPS
Research Ethics Committee and has been approved.
Please note that this approval only relates to the particular version of documentation supplied in
this specific application (ref no: 15-0230; date approved: 18-Sep-2015). If you wish to make any
amendments to the approved documentation, please note that all changes require ethical
approval prior to implementation.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as
documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This
should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes.
You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist
listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits

Yours sincerely,

IPS Research Ethics Committee
(Chair: Donna Lloyd)

Feedback from the Ethics Committee:

All requested changes have been made and the RA was approved without changes by the
Health and Safety Co-coordinator, Neil Lowley (18/09/15).

Appendix 5 - Local authority research governance framework confirmation email

RE: Research Governance Application Form.

Fearnley, Barry <BFearnley@wakefield.gov.uk>

Wed 03/06/2015 14:21

To: Francis Matthews <umfm@leeds.ac.uk>;

Hello Tom

Apologies for the delay. Further to the meeting on the 15 May 2015, I can confirm your research application was granted permission to go ahead.

If we could arrange to meet to discuss and review. May I suggest we meet on Thursday 11 June at 11.00 ? or could you suggest a date / time when you are Wakefield

Thank you

Barry

Dr Barry Fearnley
Workforce Development Officer - Social Work
Children & Young People's Services
Wakefield Council
Room 33 Manygates Adult Education Centre
Sandal
Wakefield
WF2 7DQ

Tel: 01924 304144
Mob: 07740 918 880
Email: bfearnley@wakefield.gov.uk

http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/

Suppliers - find business opportunities with the Council by registering (for free) at https://www.yortender.co.uk

Photo consent form

Some photos produced as part of this research may be used within my report, and publications and presentations of the research to other professionals. We think this will help to explain what young people tell us. If there are some photos you took that you would rather not be shared, that is fine and these will not be used. We will number each photo, and record below which photos you are happy to be used and any that you are not.
I consent to the photos which numbers are below being used in future within the final report, publication in professional journals, and presentations.

Photo no.	Photo no.

Participant
Signature…………………………………… Date …………………………….

If participant is under 16 years:
Signature of legal representative………………………………………Date ……………………….

I agree that the photos which numbers are below will not be used in future within the final report, publication in professional journals, and presentations.

Photo no.	Photo no.

Researcher Signature………………………………… Date …………………………….

Please get in touch with me if you have any other questions:
Tom Matthews - Lead Researcher - Psychologist in Clinical Training
Email: umfm@leeds.ac.uk ; Mobile: 07843998391
Remember, I can only answer this phone between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday for the time that you are involved in this study; if you send a text or leave a message I will ring you back.
Dr. Siobhan Hugh-Jones - Academic Supervisor - Associate Professor. Email: s.hugh-jones@leeds.ac.uk
Telephone: 0113 343 5744 **Dr. Alexandra Hardy** - Field Supervisor - Clinical Psychologist, Looked-After Children's Team Wakefield Local Authority. Email: Alexandra.Hardy@swyt.nhs.uk Telephone: 01924 327604 (available Wednesday – Friday).

<u>Research Study using Photography</u>

The research aims to gain an insight into what it is like to be a person aged 13-16 who are looked after, using photos taken by the young people to assist them to talk during a research interview about their experiences.

If you have questions or think there are young people on your caseload that may be eligible to take part, and that you are able to support, then please contact me.

Tom Matthews

Email: umfm@leeds.ac.uk

If you'd rather speak to me, drop me an email and I'll ring you back.

Supervised by: Dr. Alexandra Hardy & Dr. Siobhan Hugh-Jones

Appendix 8 - Adult companion confidentiality form

I consent to _____ sitting in on my interview as an adult companion and understand that whilst they are allowed to sit in the room with me, they will not be able to help me or talk during my interview.

Participant Signature………………………………………… Date …………………………….
If participant is under 16 years:
Signature of legal representative…………………………………………… Date ……………………….

I understand that everything that is said during this interview has to remain confidential. That means that it cannot be discussed outside of this room with anyone else than the people present. This is to protect the privacy of the young person I am the adult companion for. I understand that if any of the discussions or topics distress me that I can contact the researcher to discuss these further but cannot talk with others about this. This includes any concerns I have about risk or the safety of the young person participating but does not prevent me from contacting the young person's social worker if you believe there is an immediate risk to the young person that needs addressing.

Signature of Adult Companion…………………………………………… Date ……………………….

Please get in touch with me if you have any other questions:

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Doctorate in Clinical Psychology Programme, Charles Thackrah Building, University of Leeds
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Please note, I can only answer this phone between **9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday** for the time that you are involved in this study; if you send a text or leave a message I will ring you back.

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Ethics Approval No.: 15-0230
Date of Approval: 18/9/15
Period of Recruitment: July 2015 – March 2016

First of all I'd like to thank you for taking and bringing your photos today. "At our last meeting I gave you a camera to take photographs that would help somebody else to know about what is important to you and the bits of your life are important to you. You took (enter number) photographs.
This interview is about you and your life and the things in your life that are important to you. It shouldn't last more than an hour and we can have a break if you wish. Do you still agree to participate?"
"First of all I would like you to put the photographs in order. The order can be anything you want".
Tell me about the [first/second…last] photograph

- What do you want me to understand from this photograph?
- What does this tell me about you?
- How come you took this picture?
- What does it mean to you that…[enter as relevant]
- Does that matter? Why?

Which photograph is most important to you?

- Why?

Which photograph is least important to you?

- Why?
- How come you still chose to photograph it?

How does it feel looking at these photographs?

- What was it like taking the photographs?
- How does it feel talking about this photo?

Was there anything that you couldn't photograph?

- Tell me more about that
- How come you couldn't photograph that?
- What would the photograph have represented about the bits of you that confuse you?

In the event that people are in the photographs

- Who is in this photograph?
- How do you get on with them?
- Give me an example of [enter as relevant]?
- How would they describe you? What do you think about that?
- How did X (enter relevant person) respond to having their photo taken

Left column (annotations):

Image as the self
↳ inside defined by out

Self-definition / Chosen self

Self represented by image

Sense of self

Self-presentation = Comfortable / Comforted

Image as a show
↳ self on show
Self expression

Middle column (transcript):

like more than that and for everything else it's just like who, it's as I said before it's who you are you know it's what you are you know it's, it's just what you do, you know. It sort of like represents you because you know what I mean, you know when I go out on a week in to town or whatever I'm wearing like I'm wearing them shoes and it shows who you are.

I Mmm. And what did you want me to understand about you from this photo?

P I don't know that about my sense of aspect, my sense of colour, stuff like that. Sense of like what I like, what I kind of like to wear and that.

I OK so tell me what that shows me, tells me about you then

P I like blue, I like pumps, I just like wearing pumps and that, comfortable. There we go.

I Do you want to explain a bit more about how this shows me about you?

P Erm I don't know I mean it just mean it just you know actually just shows who you are, shows you know what, you know shows what you like and that. I think and I think pumps are

Right column (annotations):

Shoe communicates the self. Importance of image matching the self that want others to perceive
↳ does not communicate past, only present.
Want to show the world the self - chosen self? Appearance communicates / represents for you
↳ more than what wants to wear, it is about what wants to show/represent himself like.

Image of self expressed by shoe - controls what people perceive the self as?

Sense of self based on what I like What I wear is who I am - View of self
↳ presentation of self to world.
Clothing helps people to know me.
↳ defines inside + out?

I like to be comfortable in what I wear 'There we go' to symbolise that is it. Signal end.
↳ what you see is what you get? - inside defined by out

Use of word 'shows' - for the benefit of others Expresses self. Is life a show/performance?

Does Can you not communicate 'who you are?'

Appendix 10 - Example page of IPA analysis

Initial reflections based upon data

1) Listen to interview, alongside transcript with the relevant photograph for each section aside

2) Record reflections on photograph as listening to interview, focusing on what begins to stand out. Similar to IPA, initial reflections are made about what comes up in relation to the image.

Image 1 (earphones)

3) Stop audio and consider photo alongside what was just said.
   a) Reflection about Line 113-129 in interview - about escape and support. The photograph of the earphones is dark. Earphones are solitary thing, almost like a light in the dark or white against black, an exception to the rule or a saviour.
   b) This reflection did not emerge for photo or verbal dialogue alone, only once paired together.

Image 2 (shoes)

4) Move on with audio and next image
   a) Something stays with me and resonates about the earphones image so I return to contemplate it. Reflection – effort to get the image that dark, why represent like ths? There are lots of ways to show earphones. There is a nothingness or void of image apart from earphones.
      i) Consider the photographs as a group and this darkness is not replicated in other photographs
   b) Earphones were the first image spoken about; maybe it was the most effort in arranging or the most important photo or point for him?
5) Return to second image and audio and repeat steps 1-3
   a) Something strikes me about image 2 and this begins the reflection. This leads to a reflective dialogue happening between the participant's verbal and visual data, and the researcher's experience and interpretation of the image. This process unravels and then is done, only once for image 2.

Image 3 (t-shirts)

6) Begin stages 1-3 with image 3.
   a) Notice that understanding of image is impacted by previous images and the preceding verbal data. Image no longer standalone; the data is viewed both picture by picture and as a set, similar to the way the verbal data is viewed line-by-line, within a segment, within a whole transcript level.

Image 4 (Netflix)

7) Repeat steps 1-3.
   a) Reflect upon mistaken view of photograph when I initially saw it. The photograph has a clear meaning, representation and intention (line 387). I had however made my

own meaning, which I attempted to talk about in the interview but participant brings it back and controls the interview using photograph. Photo-elicitation allowed him to stick with his plan.

b) The meaning was not within the image and so I had related to it in a different way, as what it meant to me. the image was instead used to begin a conversation, and was not referred back to during the interview. It was a springboard, and so during the analysis I made an occasional glance but nothing particularly resonated about the image.

Image 5 (Deodrant)

8) Steps 1-3. Use photographs as a set to provide context to this individual photo.
9) This is a salient photograph so I return to reflecting on it on a number of occasions, at different points when the audio and image meet and interact in my reflections. I notice I relate to this image differently to image 4 which was just a springboard for No Pseudonym.

Image 6 (Life story book)

10) Repeat steps 1-3. Photograph feels less interesting and I wonder if that was because I was there when it was taken, so I have a physical memory and experience of the object which I am relating to, rather than a symbolic image.

Analysing the data using IPA: Exploratory comments

11) Read and re-read transcript line by line with photos alongside.
12) Aspects of photographs, additional to the initial reflections begin to emerge and add context and understanding to the dialogue and understanding of the young person's narrative.
   a) Reflection on image 3 (t-shirts) – something about the image 'jars' with me and I return to it. It appeared choice and importance of t-shirts is much greater than appearance. T-shirts are plain and in no way salient within the image, didn't initially communicate much as quite 'generic' but symbolise a huge amount to No Psuedonym. Dialogue talks about "sense of style" but the t-shirts appear so plain to me and not 'style' in the way I understand it as self-expression. The t-shirts are about choice, judgement, view of others, view of themselves.
   b) Reflection on image 1 (earphones) – earphones as blocking world, ear plugs that keep out the noise.
13) Understanding of the photograph is deeply embedded in the dialogue, in order to prioritise their meaning in my understanding.

Analysing the data using IPA: Moving from exploratory comments to emerging themes

14) Photos are not really used during the emerging themes, and instead appeared to be more involved in the emerging exploratory comments. The photographs remain in my mind to help me understand the data as a whole, but no longer am I focused on the parts which they related to, with these reflections being more frequent in the earlier stage of analysis.

Phase 3 Topic Guide
1. Study outcomes discussed. Interpretations, conclusions, and plans for the findings.

2. Feedback on results
   a. What is it like to see and hear these study findings
      i. What is it like having them set out in front of you for you to see?
   b. Which fit with you or sound a bit like you or your experiences?
   c. Which do not fit with you or sound like you or your experiences?
   d. What is it like seeing the group of young people's findings, knowing that you are in there somewhere?

3. Feedback on participating
   a. What was it like to be approached and asked to take part in the study?
   b. How was the interview for you?
   c. How were things afterwards?
      i. Have you been thinking about any of it since we last met?
      ii. Was there anything in particular you noticed yourself thinking/feeling/doing afterwards?
   d. What did you like about taking part?
      i. What was good about how we did it?
   e. What did you not like about taking part?
   f. Were there any things you found hard about the process of taking part?
      i. What could we do different in the future?

4. Feedback on photo-elicitation
   a. What was it like doing the photo task?
   b. What was it like talking about the photos?
   c. What was good about having the photos to talk about?
   d. What was bad or less good about having the photos to talk about?
   e. If photo of theirs is used to describe theme
      i. What is it like seeing your photo being used to help me describe the research findings today?
   f. If a photo is not included
      i. What is it like not seeing any of your photos being used to help me describe the research findings today?
5. Final question to close up
   a. What has it been like taking part in the research and the chats we have had today and the last time I met you?
   b. Thank you for taking part.

Appendix 13 – Contextual information sheet

<u>Contextual Information</u>

<u>Psuedonym</u> _____

- At what age came in to care?

- Any contact with family? How much?

- How many placements have you had?

- How long have you been in this placement?

- Do you live with any of your siblings?

- How many schools have you been to?

- Any other information?