A MODEL OF SCHOOL INCLUSION BASED ON THE EXPERIENCES OF LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN

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0.1 OVERARCHING ABSTRACT

Outcomes for looked-after children are generally poor in comparison to their peers. This includes educational outcomes. One route to improving outcomes for this population is improving their inclusion in schools. They experience more school changes and exclusions than their peers.

Viewing people as experts in their own lives, this thesis used the views and experiences of looked-after children and care leavers to develop a model of the interrelating factors that support the inclusion in schools of looked-after children.

A meta-ethnography was used to develop the initial model based on previous literature on the school experiences of looked-after children. An empirical study then provided support for and developed the model. It did this via focus groups with looked-after children and care leavers, as part of which a questionnaire based on the model was developed. The questionnaire was distributed to care leavers. Regression analyses were used on the respondents' data to determine which of the factors from the model predicted feelings of inclusion and one-another.

The five main factors identified from the meta-ethnography were: 'agency', 'supportive relationships', 'consistency', 'others who support and value education' and 'looked-after status understood'. The empirical study found support for most aspects of the model. The importance of being treated as an individual with agency instead of a label, and therefore not being seen as ontologically different to other children, was found to be most important in predicting feelings of inclusion. In turn, this factor was predicted by having had supportive relationships and fewer school changes.

Implications for supporting looked-after children are discussed. In particular, the need for a philosophical shift is described. This shift must redirect professionals' objectifying gaze from looked-after children to the label 'looked-after'.

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1.1 ABSTRACT

Outcomes for looked-after children are generally poor in comparison to their peers. This includes educational outcomes. A route to improving these outcomes is improving inclusion in schools for this population. They experience more school changes and exclusions than their peers. This meta-ethnography looked at previous research on the views and experiences of looked-after children and care leavers to develop a model of the interrelating factors that support their inclusion in schools.

Five main factors were identified: 'agency', 'supportive relationships', 'consistency', 'others who support and value education' and 'looked-after status understood'. These are discussed in relation to models of inclusion, belonging and community. The results suggested that the label 'looked-after' prevented others seeing the young people's individualities, and resulted in their being treated as though they were ontologically different from their peers. It also nonetheless suggested that looked-after children also wanted support in the form of the five factors identified. These should therefore be delivered in a way that does not add to their sense of difference.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this meta-ethnography was to develop a model of the factors that support the inclusion in schools of looked-after children, based on the views and experiences of this population.

In this introduction, the label 'looked-after children' is first explored. Evidence is then provided for why it is important to investigate the factors that support the inclusion in schools of this population.

1.2.1 LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN

The focus of this thesis is on looked-after children. This term will therefore now be explored.

The term 'looked-after' was introduced by The Children Act (1989) to refer to children in public care. Children are labelled looked-after when their parents are temporarily or permanently unable to provide continuing care for them, and the local authority assumes parental responsibility for the child. Children can be placed with immediate or extended family, friends, foster carers or in residential homes. Some children are placed 'at home in care' with their parents under the care of the authority. Some unaccompanied asylum seekers may also be placed in the care of a local authority under the Children Act, section 20.

Looked-after children do not make up a distinct or homogenous category. However, when they are labelled looked-after they become members of the group 'looked-after children', which exists as a topic of discourse in society as a result of this shared legal status. While experiences of entering public care will be diverse, they may have similar effects for some looked-after children and may result in similar difficulties in school, possibly partly because looked-after children may be viewed by some as a homogenous category due to their labelling (Eyben, 2007; Foucault, 1977, 1988). Wishing therefore to avoid generalisation, labelling and essentialist terminology, the label 'looked-after' is used to refer to children with that shared legal status. It is not, however, used unproblematically and the brief critique given here has been provided to deter essentialist assumptions about the children to whom it applies.

Outcomes for children looked-after by local authorities are, on average, poor compared to those of their peers who are not in public care. These include educational outcomes (Department for Education, 2012), which despite some small improvements over the last few years remain poor in comparison to peers. The percentage of looked-after

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children achieving A*-C grades in English and Maths at GCSE in 2011/12 was 15.5%, as compared to 58.7% of all children (Department for Education, 2012). Outcomes also include increased probability of involvement in the criminal justice system, higher incidences of depression or anxiety, and a higher likelihood of unemployment and homelessness (Wade & Dixon, 2006). The majority enter care because of abuse and neglect and 45% of those between 5 and 17 have been described as having a diagnosable mental health condition (McAuley & Davis, 2009; Meltzer, Britain, & Britain, 2003)

The vulnerability of looked-after children as a group is often commented on; looked-after children can face a number of barriers to achieving positive outcomes because, as a result of their experiences, "they have often had a disrupted education, they may have difficulties with their social and emotional wellbeing, and they often lack stable relationships in their lives, resulting in attachment problems and a lack of resilience." (Department for Education and Skills, 2007, p. 5). Dent and Cameron (2003, p. 3) said of children in public care that "there are very few groups in contemporary society who exhibit so many of the indicators of social exclusion (homeless, jobless and friendless) as these children and young people so frequently do."

There should be a tension then, between wanting to work for the best for members of this group whilst simultaneously not seeing them as defined by their group membership, recognising their heterogeneity and treating them as unique individuals.

1.2.2 *THE INCLUSION OF LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS*
The focus of this review is looked-after children, specifically their inclusion in schools. The concept of inclusion will therefore now be explored.

Inclusion is a much-used and seemingly polysemic word. Defining what constitutes an inclusive education is a challenge. One way to view it is as an achievable state in which all children are educated in the same environment (Stainback & Stainback, 1992), while another perspective is seeing it as something to aspire towards, but ultimately may not be achievable (Kavale, 2002). It is seen from this perspective as a process encompassing the wellbeing of all pupils (Barton, 2005). There is more to inclusion than students all physically existing in the same building, however. Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan, and Shaw (2002) argued that inclusion is about promoting all pupils' presence (avoiding withdrawal from mainstream or integration-based settings), participation, acceptance and achievement. This is close to the concept of inclusion referred to in this

meta-ethnography: a state in which all members of a community are equally present; all members are accepted in that they are not required to change, but the setting changes to meet their needs; all members are enabled to participate authentically to the extent that they wish to do so. An important aspect of inclusion is also to develop a sense of community and belonging due to the importance of this for successful learning and well-being (Prince & Hadwin, 2013; Warnock & Terzi, 2010).

The Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1994) and more recently the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), have called on governments to provide inclusive education for all. The European Convention on Human Rights (1950) (EHCR), which is now embodied in UK law as part of the Human Rights Act (1998), also mentions the right to not be denied an education.

As well as rights-based arguments for inclusion, there are also needs-based ones; a sense of belonging has been described as a basic human need (Maslow, 1943; Osterman, 2000) and has been associated with improved psychological outcomes and mental health (Shochet, Smith, Furlong, & Homel, 2011), while Baumeister (2005) used a series of experiments to show that social exclusion could result in increased aggression, reduced self-regulation, reduced pro-social behaviour and increased self-defeating behaviour. Ryan and Deci (2000b, p. 68) described relatedness (the universal desire to interact, be connected to, and experience caring for others) as one of three factors which, according to self-determination theory, "when satisfied yield enhanced self-motivation and mental health and when thwarted lead to diminished motivation and well-being".

Waters, Cross, and Runions (2009, p. 521) developed a model of 'school connectedness' based on self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) in which they argued that "connectedness to school is therefore the extent to which students feel autonomous yet supported, competent in all they attempt and related to adults and peers." McMillan and Chavis (1986) developed a model of a psychological sense of community, in which they claim that a sense of community is composed of four elements. These are: membership, which includes five attributes (boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment and a common symbol system); influence (members feel that they have some influence in the group, and are influenced by the group); integration and fulfilment of needs (members feel

rewarded in some way for being part of the community); shared emotional connection (a shared history or identification with the history and shared participation).

A sense of belonging, connectedness and community, as described above are similar to inclusion but not the same. They might be particularly important for looked-after children, who may be more likely to have problems with family relationships (Hutchinson, 2011), a traditional source of a sense of belonging. Feeling included, and therefore accepted, in school may be an alternative route to meeting these needs. Schools can provide supportive relationships with members of staff, opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000) and chances to experience exercising agency, opportunities for which can be lacking for looked-after children (Leeson, 2007). For children who have been separated from their birth families and may experience frequent placement moves, school may therefore be one stable place in which a sense of belonging, connectedness and community may develop.

The Children Act, section 22C(8)(b) (together with associated Regulations) requires that local authorities do not disrupt the child's education and training when making a placement decision. However, looked-after children still experience more school changes than their peers (Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), 2009). They also tend to be permanently excluded from schools more frequently than their peers who are not in public care (Department for Education, 2012).

Berridge (2007) suggested that affluent families use a variety of strategies to ensure their children's academic success. For example, "cultural capital is used to social advantage, reflected in language use and attitudes towards education, instilling appropriate values of hard work, discipline and deferred gratification" (Devine, 2004, p. 180). Such families also know how the system works and are able to manipulate it to the benefit of their children, by gaining access to advantageous social networks, mixing with other, high-achieving, middle-class families, reinforcing the expectation to succeed, while discouraging inappropriate relationships. These are opportunities that less affluent children and looked-after children are likely to lack. Berridge (2007, p. 6) stated that "if society genuinely wants looked-after children to do well at school, the state needs to match some of these middle-class strategies."

1.2.3 RATIONALE
This literature review uses a meta-ethnographic approach to explore how looked-after children's experiences of school can inform approaches to supporting their inclusion in

schools. Another aim of this review is also to contribute to the development of an original research question for an empirical research project.

Focusing specifically on previous qualitative research on the school experiences of looked-after children was both an ethical and practical decision. All people have a right to participate in decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them (van der Riet, 2008). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) stated the right of children to be consulted regarding decisions that affect them. As looked-after children are in danger of exclusion, and efforts and decisions are made to prevent this, it is necessary to consult looked-after children regarding how exclusion may be prevented. Not only is such consultation an ethical responsibility, it is also a practical one. Children are experts in their own lives, so looked-after children have expertise regarding the experiences of going into care and going to school with the looked-after label (Danby & Farrell, 2004). Their perspectives will be invaluable for the development of the model.

1.3 METHOD

The approach to synthesis used here is meta-ethnography as defined by Noblit and Hare (1988). This involved translating studies into one another and interpreting the themes derived from this synthesis. In summary, the process involved the following seven steps:

1. Getting started
2. Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest
3. Reading the studies
4. Determining how the studies are related
5. Translating the studies into one another
6. Synthesising translations
7. Expressing the synthesis

To attempt a synthesis at all may appear to assume that going into care is a universal experience regardless of the actual events, context and interpretation of the experiencer. At the least it betrays some normalising and essentialist assumptions about looked-after children. The practice of theming in itself likely further silences minority voices and loses nuances of meaning. However, it was necessary to look for commonalities in a trade-off between richness of information and usefulness. Synthesising was hoped to produce a model that resonated as much as possible with the experiences of as many

looked-after children as possible, whilst recognising that it would not do so for all looked-after children.

For the sake of transparency concerning the method used, an in-depth description of the method is provided in the following subsections.

1.3.1 GETTING STARTED

There is little qualitative research on the experiences of looked-after children in schools, perhaps because of difficulties accessing participants who are described as vulnerable or hard-to-reach (Liamputtong, 2006). While a few researchers (Harker, Dobel-Ober, Akhurst, Berridge, & Sinclair, 2004; Harker, Dobel-Ober, Lawrence, Berridge, & Sinclair, 2003) have investigated looked-after children's perceptions of support for educational achievement and one has looked at a sense of belonging (Howell, 2012), none specifically look at perceptions of support for inclusion. Whilst a sense of belonging, community or connectedness may arise from feeling included in school (Prince & Hadwin, 2013), they are not the same as being included. Therefore studies on the looked-after children's experiences of school will be interrogated with a particular focus on what supports the inclusion in schools of looked-after children.

1.3.2 DECIDING WHAT IS RELEVANT TO THE INITIAL INTEREST

Inclusion criteria and searching

In deciding what was relevant to the initial interest, it appeared to be reasonable to look at only qualitative or mixed-methods studies that had focused on the views of people who had some experience of being in care. It was also decided that the studies should have a focus on school experiences so as to be relevant to the research question.

Only studies from the United Kingdom (UK) were used. The UK was chosen since one purpose of the meta-ethnography was to inform a piece of empirical research conducted in the United Kingdom. It was felt that the opinions of looked-after children in Singapore or America (Celeste, 2011; Day, Riebschleger, Dworsky, Damashek, & Fogarty, 2012), while interesting, would not be helpful in achieving this purpose.

In summary, the inclusion criteria required studies that:

- Were conducted in the United Kingdom
- Were conducted within the last ten years
- Had a qualitative component
- Focused on the school experiences of looked-after children

Standard searching methods were used to identify relevant studies. The search was conducted between 18 October 2012 and 8 February 2013. The online search tools used were the databases Scopus, Web of Knowledge, Ovid, ERIC, the British Education Index and Google Scholar. Bibliographies of relevant studies and lists of studies citing relevant studies were also searched.

To find studies on the *school experiences* of *looked-after children*, the following search terms were used, combined with the Boolean operator AND:

- "looked after" or "in care"
- child* or "young people"
- school or education*
- experience*

The search yielded four peer-reviewed studies, three theses and a study published by Save the Children. There was a delay in accessing one thesis (Baker, 2009) as it had to be scanned before it could be sent electronically and this took some time. When it arrived, it was not included for several reasons. It did not have a focus on support for children, the themes were derived from views of carers and school staff as well as children, and it did not add anything new.

Honesties

Following Scheurich (1995) and Savin-Baden and Major (2007), it was decided that the position of 'validity' has led to questionable and even meaningless practice in interpretive research, treating qualitative data as though it were quantitative. The idea of there being a 'correct' interpretation, or that it is possible to find some final 'truth' about participants' inner worlds that is coherent and uninfluenced by context, delivery and setting, is antithetical to interpretive research. 'Quality'-appraising tools were therefore avoided, such as the positivist approach taken by Cesario, Morin, and Santa-Donato (2002), or the approach taken by Spencer and Britain (2003) which they state is not compatible with the assumption that "there are no privileged accounts, only alternative understandings". The approach developed by Savin-Baden and Major (2007) for evaluating studies suitable for interpretive meta ethnography based on 'honesties' was preferred. Savin-Baden and Major (2007) described how the concept of honesties enables an acknowledgement that trust and truths are fragile. It enables engagement with the messiness and complexity of data interpretation in ways that reflect the lives of participants. Rather than evaluating studies based on how well they identify what the

participants' 'true' beliefs or experiences are, an honesties-based approach evaluates studies on how well they represent the multiple voices of the participants (Bakhtin, 1984; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992; Marková, 2003b) and recognise that researcher biases may affect the interpretation of these voices.

The approach uses seven criteria, some of which are more self-explanatory than others. Table 1.1 provides further information about what each criterion means. More detailed descriptions of the first four shown in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 were given by Savin-Baden and Fisher (2002). The last three were presented by Savin-Baden and Major (2007) but not described in detail. Their meanings have been interpreted using a general understanding of Savin-Bader's epistemological approach, derived from reading her published work.

Table 1.1 Instrument for rating the 'honesties' of studies for interpretive meta-ethnography

Criteria	Meaning
Researcher(s) situated in relation to participants	Researchers say how they have sought to be reflexive in the interpretation of data in order to situate themselves and their stories in relation to the participants.
	Researchers ask themselves and their participants questions about the ways in which their experiences "do and do not relate to the broader context of past, present and future selves"*
Mistakes voiced	Researchers comment on mistakes made and difficulties encountered.
	Researchers make clear the changes made to the research design and explain why they were made – this "demonstrates not only that we have been conscious of flaws and sought to rectify them but also that our research design can be responsive to participants and the emergent nature of collaborative studies."*
Researcher(s) situated in relation to the data	Researchers acknowledge their own stance, beliefs and perspectives and do not act as if they are "sitting outside the transcriptions, looking in on the perspectives of participants."*
Researcher(s) take a critical stance towards research	Researchers question the extent to which researchers have "followed the methodology that they adopted through to the data interpretation section."*
	Researchers "examine whether the data really have been interpreted and ensure that the research not only has been rigorous but also has engaged with the multiplicity of truths and honesties that emerges from participants' stories."*
Participant involvement in data interpretation	Data has been taken back to the original participants who are invited to be involved in its interpretation.
Study theoretically situated	Study's rationale, methodology and findings are related back to theory.
Different versions of participants' identities acknowledged	Researchers do not attempt to represent participants' 'true' identities, knowledges, beliefs or ideas, instead acknowledging the multiple voices of the participants.

*Quotes are from Savin-Baden and Fisher (2002, p. 192)

The studies selected

The studies selected were:

- Driscoll (2011)
- Harker et al. (2002)
- Harker et al. (2003)
- Howell (2012)
- Martin and Jackson (2002)
- McKay (2006)
- McLaughlin (2002)

The scores given to them when rating honesties can be seen in Table 1.2 and some basic details of the seven studies used are given in Table 1.3.

Table 1.2 Ratings of 'honesties' of studies.

	Driscoll (2011)	Harker et al (2002)	Harker et al (2003)	Howell (2012)	Martin and Jackson (2002)	McKay (2006)	McLaughlin (2002)
Researcher(s) situated in relation to participants	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Mistakes voiced	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
Researcher(s) situated in relation to the data	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Researcher(s) take a critical stance towards research	1	1	1	1	0	3	1
Participant involvement in data interpretation	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Study theoretically situated	2	0	0	3	1	3	1
Different versions of participants' identities acknowledged	0	0	0	0	0	3	0

0 = no mention, 1 = some mention, 2 = good mention, 3 = extensive mention

Table 1.3 Basic details of the studies used.

	Driscoll (2011)	Harker et al (2002)	Harker et al (2003)	Howell (2012)	Martin and Jackson (2002)	McKay (2006)	McLaughlin (2002)
Number of participants	7	80	56	7	38	27	52
Age range	16-20	10-18	12-19	12-16*	All <35 except 1, mean age 26	6-17	9-17
Living arrangements	Foster care, independent living and supported lodgings in England	Foster and residential care placements in England	Foster and residential care placements in England	In England	In Scotland	Foster care in Scotland at start, 2 later moved to residential	Residential care, foster care and at home in care in Northern Ireland
Focus	The significance of resilience and supportive relationships for care leavers fulfilling educational aspirations	Perceptions of support for educational progress	Perceptions of support for educational progress (16-18 month follow-up)	Factors that facilitate a sense of belonging in school	'High achievers' on support for enhancing educational experiences	The discourses that children in care use to describe their experiences of education	Using young peoples' experiences to suggest ways to enhance educational achievement
Methods	Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Unstructured, child-led interviews	Participatory semi-structured interviews, focus groups
Data analysis	Grounded theory	Unspecified theming method	Unspecified theming method	Thematic analysis	Unspecified theming method	Discourse analysis	Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorising

* The Howell (2012) study was a mixed methods study. The ages of the 62 participants in the quantitative element of the study are given as ranging from 12 to 16. The 7 participants in the qualitative part are members of the original cohort of 62. Their ages are not given, but must also be somewhere in the range 12-16.

1.3.3 READING THE STUDIES

The studies were read and searched for common and recurring concepts in relation to the focus of the study. As most of the studies did not have a specific focus on inclusion, instead often looking at achievement, it was necessary to ensure that the concepts noticed clearly related to supporting inclusion.

A mapping table was used (Table 1.4) to document the developing findings from each paper and to begin to note recurring concepts. This method facilitated reading and later interpreting.

Following Britten et al. (2002), Schutz's (1962) notion of first- and second-order constructs was used. First-order constructs are lay understandings, while second-order constructs are the constructs of the social sciences. As several of the studies were atheoretical, it was not always possible to derive constructs of the social sciences as second-order constructs. Therefore second-order constructs also included atheoretical explanations, in particular those that suggested relationships between themes. These constructs were also included in the mapping table.

1.3.4 DETERMINING HOW THE STUDIES ARE RELATED

There is considerable overlap between stages three to six and qualitative interpretation cannot be reduced to a sequence of mechanical tasks (Britten et al., 2002). It is therefore difficult to categorise specific actions as belonging to different stages. Through reading the studies, concepts which recurred across multiple studies were noted. As these concepts were noted and placed in the mapping table, themes emerged into which groups of concepts could be categorised. These themes were revised upon reading and re-reading of the studies until it was felt that they best represented all of the concepts that had been found. The mapping table (Table 1.4) developed to show how each theme presented itself in each paper, giving the constituent concepts of that theme which occurred in each study. The terminology used to label themes was intended to encompass as best as possible all the relevant constituent concepts from each paper. The main relevant second-order constructs arising from each paper were also included in the table. Once the mapping table was completed, it therefore included themes which contained the recurring concepts, as well as second-order interpretations which suggested relationships between the themes.

1.3.5 TRANSLATING THE STUDIES INTO ONE ANOTHER

The themes, most of which recurred across all studies, were placed in a second table (Table 1.5), with the second-order constructs relating to each theme expressed in a second column. The terminology used in the original studies was preserved as much as possible when expressing the concepts and second-order constructs. Where these constructs have been paraphrased, they do not appear in quotation marks.

1.3.6 SYNTHESISING TRANSLATIONS

The concepts and interpretations implied relationships between the studies. It became clear that the studies did not refute one-another even where a theme was not identified in a specific paper. The relationships between themes enabled a line of argument to be developed. Third-order interpretations were developed from the second-order interpretations

1.3.7 EXPRESSING THE SYNTHESIS

The synthesis is expressed in the sections that follow, the findings and discussion sections.

1.4 FINDINGS

In this section, the key themes that emerged from the meta-ethnography are described. This is followed by the development of a line of argument concerning how these themes interrelate. This is achieved by considering the themes themselves and the interpretations given in the studies selected.

1.4.1 THEMES

The key concepts identified were *agency*, *supportive relationships, consistency, others who value and support education* and *looked-after status understood*. Table 1.4 shows how these themes were expressed in each study.

A particularly frequently occurring tension throughout the studies was between the recognition that some accommodation for the difficulties the participants faced would be beneficial, whilst also not wanting the looked-after status to define, dominate and homogenise their identities. This feeling of having one's identity controlled by others often resulted in a desire to have more agency, privacy and to have their individuality recognised more.

1.4.2 DEVELOPING A LINE OF ARGUMENT

The second order constructs from each study are also presented in Table 1.4. Those in quote marks are lifted directly from the text of the corresponding studies. The others are

interpretations of the explanation given by the corresponding studies, although the wording is kept as similar as possible.

Table 1.4 Key concepts; what supports the inclusion of looked-after children in schools?

	Driscoll (2011)	Harker et al (2002)	Harker et al (2003)	Howell (2012)	Martin and Jackson (2002)	McKay (2006)	McLaughlin (2002)
Agency	Given information; treated as an individual	Consulted about decisions; given information; financial independence; no stigmatising	Autonomy; responsibility; selective disclosure; no stigmatising	Consulted about decisions; opinions acted on; allowed to express individuality; not singled out; joint target setting	Individuality recognised; no stigmatising; made to feel normal; not singled out	Privacy; control over personal information; selective disclosure; control over own identity; consulted; individuality recognised; not treated differently or singled out; no stigmatising	Individuality recognised; listened to; opinions acted on; selective disclosure; given information; no stigmatising; made to feel normal
Supportive relationships	Authenticity, trust and care from a supportive adult	Teachers who provide emotional support	Teachers provide both study-specific and emotional support.	Relationship with a trusted significant adult; someone to talk to	A special relationship with someone who made time to listen and makes you feel valued, often acting as a mentor or role model; someone forms a close bond and plays an active part in the child's life; child actively chooses this person	Adults need to know you as an individual; authenticity in interactions; teachers who take the time to get to know you; listened to in confidence; friends as allies; nurture and acceptance despite everything; empathising without adding to sense of difference	Supportive carers; teachers 'going the extra mile'; friends an important source of support for older students; good relationship with adult you can talk to, confide in, someone who listens
Consistency	One consistent professional	Consistent placement; consistent school; placement changes affect concentration at school; school changes highlight difference to others	Consistent placement; placement changes affect concentration at school	Young people choose to talk to the adult they have known the longest	Consistent school; regular attendance; consistent mentor; placement moves outside term-time	Lack of stability leads to worry and poor concentration	Minimal changes of placement/school; uncertainty affects concentration

	Driscoll (2011)	Harker et al (2002)	Harker et al (2003)	Howell (2012)	Martin and Jackson (2002)	McKay (2006)	McLaughlin (2002)
Others who value and support education	Enthusiasm for education from carers	Someone who emphasises the importance of and takes an interest in education ; friends who do well in school; encouraging teachers	Placements who promote attendance, acknowledge success and have high expectations; efforts acknowledged; friends motivate attendance and concentration.	Joint setting of targets	Positive encouragement from significant others; interest and importance placed on education by birth parents; high expectations; enforcing attendance	Encouragement	Carers with high expectations; others who regret not achieving in school; recognition – rewards for achievement
Looked-after status understood		Additional academic assistance; awareness of emotional difficulties; understanding from peers; no stigmatising	Understanding of difficulties; no stigmatising		Extra attention from teachers –often just making time to listen; understanding from peers; care talked about; no stigmatising high expectations	Training for teachers; rule-bending; no stigmatising	Training for teachers; additional help from teachers; no stigmatising

	Driscoll (2011)	Harker et al (2002)	Harker et al (2003)	Howell (2012)	Martin and Jackson (2002)	McKay (2006)	McLaughlin (2002)
Second order interpretations	Authenticity, trust and care from a supportive adult enable young people who are very self-reliant to accept their support and encouragement. Impersonal and mechanistic interactions focused on monitoring leave young people misunderstood, compliant and ceasing to engage meaningfully. "More attention should be paid to nurturing informal sources of support that are easily lost at times of transition, when changes in accommodation or education occur, including relationships identified by young people themselves." (p. 8)	"Young people want others to recognize their individuality and avoid attaching generalized stereotypes to all children looked-after" (p. 99)	"Promotion of an educational ethos within care placements was frequently associated with concepts of stability and security. Young people experiencing a relatively long-term placement may be better able to build a relationship with carers whereby educational encouragement and support takes on enhanced meaning since it comes from a respected and established figure in the young person's life." (p. 282-283)	A feeling of connection to school develops from feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness. These factors interact with organisational aspects of the school ecology (pastoral systems, student involvement in decision making, student-centred approaches to teaching and learning) and interpersonal factors.	Linked to normalization, it should be as unacceptable for looked-after children to truant as it is for those who are not in the care system. School attendance should be enforced and made the norm by fostering an educational home environment.	The view of the looked-after status as ontological leads to a view of looked-after children as objects rather than subjects, which enables a gaze that highlights their differences, invades their privacy and prevents genuine listening. Being looked into in this way paradoxically leads to them being looked through as though invisible. "A sometimes overpowering sense of public intrusion into the children's private lives permeated their accounts but the final data chapter considers the ways they utilised their own agency sometimes as a struggle to resist the markers of difference experienced" (p. 1)	"Young people identified not being able to concentrate on schoolwork because of instability in care placement, worry about birth family members and uncertainty about the future, as the main barriers to learning and achieving." (p. 103) "Young people need as much information as possible. Carers and professionals should be as honest and open as possible rather than trying to protect young people from worrying by withholding information." (p. 103) "Training on care issues in general could reduce the amount of specific information teachers need access to on individual young people." (p. 83)

Through the development of key concepts and second-order interpretations, it became clear that the studies did not contradict one another. However, the themes were expressed differently in different studies, as can be ascertained from Table 1.4, and occasionally a study highlighted the fact that it had not found one aspect of a theme that was present in other research. For example, Howell (2012) did not find friendship to be as strong a theme as they had expected, whereas others (McKay, 2006; McLaughlin, 2002) did. The relationship between the studies appeared to be one that allowed a line of argument to be developed, since many of the second-order interpretations, which concerned relationships between themes, overlapped with one-another. From these second-order interpretations, several third-order interpretations could therefore be constructed, which further developed an understanding of the relationships between themes.

These third-order interpretations aimed to give explanations based on the second-order constructs, again with a specific focus on the relationships between themes. The concepts and second- and third-order interpretations are presented in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Synthesis including concepts and second- and third-order interpretations.

Concepts	Second-order interpretations	Third-order interpretations
Agency: consulted about decisions; opinions acted on; given information; individuality recognised; autonomy; responsibility; selective disclosure; privacy; not stigmatising; not singling out; made to feel normal; joint setting of targets	"Young people want others to recognize their individuality and avoid attaching generalized stereotypes to all children looked-after" The view of the looked-after status as ontological leads to a view of looked-after children as objects rather than subjects, which enables a gaze that highlights their differences, invades their privacy and prevents genuine listening. Being looked *into* in this way ironically leads to them being looked *through* as though invisible. A feeling of connection to school develops from feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness. These factors interact with organisational aspects of the school ecology (pastoral systems, student involvement in decision making, student-centred approaches to teaching and learning) and interpersonal factors. "A sometimes overpowering sense of public intrusion into the children's private lives permeated their accounts but the final data chapter considers the ways they utilised their own agency sometimes as a struggle to resist the markers of difference experienced"	Young people feel that adults who view them as subjects rather than objects, and who therefore recognise their agency, enable them to feel normal rather than stigmatised and are capable of listening to them in an authentic way that enables them to feel genuinely heard. The resulting feelings of autonomy and relatedness lead to feelings of belonging. Looked-after young people are often mature, self-sufficient and self-reliant, and actively resist being objectified.
Supportive relationships: a special relationship characterised by authenticity, care and trust; someone who makes time to listen and make you feel valued; a mentor or role-model; someone who forms a close bond; adults who get to know you as an individual; someone who listens in confidence; someone who accepts you despite everything; someone who empathises without adding to your sense of difference; someone chosen by the young person; friends	Authenticity, trust and care from a supportive adult enable young people who are very self-reliant to accept their support and encouragement. Impersonal and mechanistic interactions focused on monitoring leave young people misunderstood, compliant and ceasing to engage meaningfully.	Young people feel more able to accept support and encouragement from the adults who treat them as subjects rather than objects and who listen to with authenticity, trust and care. These interactions reinforce feelings of agency and autonomy.

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Concepts	Second-order interpretations	Third-order interpretations
Consistency: one consistent professional; a consistent placement; a consistent school; regular school attendance; a consistent mentor; adults who have known you a long time; lack of consistency causes anxiety and affects concentration at school; school changes highlight difference to others; placement moves outside term-time	Young people experiencing a relatively long-term placement may be better able to build a relationship with carers whereby educational encouragement and support takes on enhanced meaning since it comes from a respected and established figure in the young person's life. "More attention should be paid to nurturing informal sources of support that are easily lost at times of transition, when changes in accommodation or education occur, including relationships identified by young people themselves." "Young people identified not being able to concentrate on schoolwork because of instability in care placement, worry about birth family members and uncertainty about the future, as the main barriers to learning and achieving." "Young people need as much information as possible. Carers and professionals should be as honest and open as possible rather than trying to protect young people from worrying by withholding information."	It can take time to build the kind of relationship that enables young people to accept support and encouragement. The consistency of such relationships is therefore important. A lack of consistency results in anxiety and difficulty concentrating in school. Young people need as much information as possible to lessen such anxiety.
Others who value and support education: people who are enthusiastic about education and take an interest; friends who do well in school; encouraging teachers; successes acknowledged, high expectations; others who regret not achieving; joint setting of targets	"Promotion of an educational ethos within care placements was frequently associated with concepts of stability and security." Linked to normalization, it should be as unacceptable for looked-after children to truant as it is for those who are not in the care system. School attendance should be enforced and made the norm by fostering an educational home environment.	Experiencing others who value education may encourage young people to attend school more frequently, resulting in greater stability and consistency in their lives, which in turn may enable the young person to feel normal due to their differences not being highlighted to others. This may prevent objectification and promote agency.
Looked-after status understood: awareness of difficulties faced/facing; additional support from teachers (academic and emotional); training for teachers; understanding from peers; rule-bending; no stigmatising; high expectations	"Training on care issues in general could reduce the amount of specific information teachers need access to on individual young people."	A better understanding of what it means to be in care from all professionals could lead to less invasion into the privacy of looked-after children, less objectification, and therefore less damage to their feelings of agency.

By considering the concepts, second- and third-order interpretations, a line-of-argument can be expressed as follows:

Looked-after children would feel more included in schools if they were given more chances to exercise personal agency, express their individuality and have their opinions heard and acted upon, especially regarding decision affecting their lives. This is partly to do with feeling treated as a subject rather than an object and feeling normal, rather than being singled out or stigmatised and made to feel different/separate, and also being in control of one's own identity rather than this being defined by others.

This could be aided by adults and peers having a greater understanding of what it means to be looked-after. This greater understanding could prevent stigma, singling out and invasions of privacy, and could promote higher expectations while also enabling staff to make allowances for the particular difficulties being faced by looked-after children. The removal of stigma/blame in this way could further enable adults to view looked-after children as individuals, rather than as objects, by demonstrating that they are not in care due to any ontological difference.

Looked-after children would also feel more included in schools if they were given more opportunities to experience supportive relationships. Experiencing authentic, supportive relationships would also reinforce feelings of agency, autonomy and belonging. They would be more able to accept support and encouragement from people in such relationships.

Such support and encouragement regarding education may enable young people to attend school more often, which in turn may enable the young person to feel normal due to their differences not being highlighted to others. This may prevent objectification and promote agency. It might also improve consistency in the young person's life.

Consistency was highlighted as important in all areas of life. It was suggested that it could reduce anxiety and improve concentration at school. Consistency in relationships would enable such relationships to become more authentic, trusting, caring and supportive. Consistency of information was also mentioned, in particular that it should come from one trusted professional.

The line of argument described above describes the influence of the concepts upon one-another. These influences are illustrated in Figure 1.1. Arrows between two concepts indicate that the first concept is theorised to influence the second concept.

Figure 1.1 A model of how the concepts derived from meta-ethnography influence one-another, based on second- and third-order interpretations.
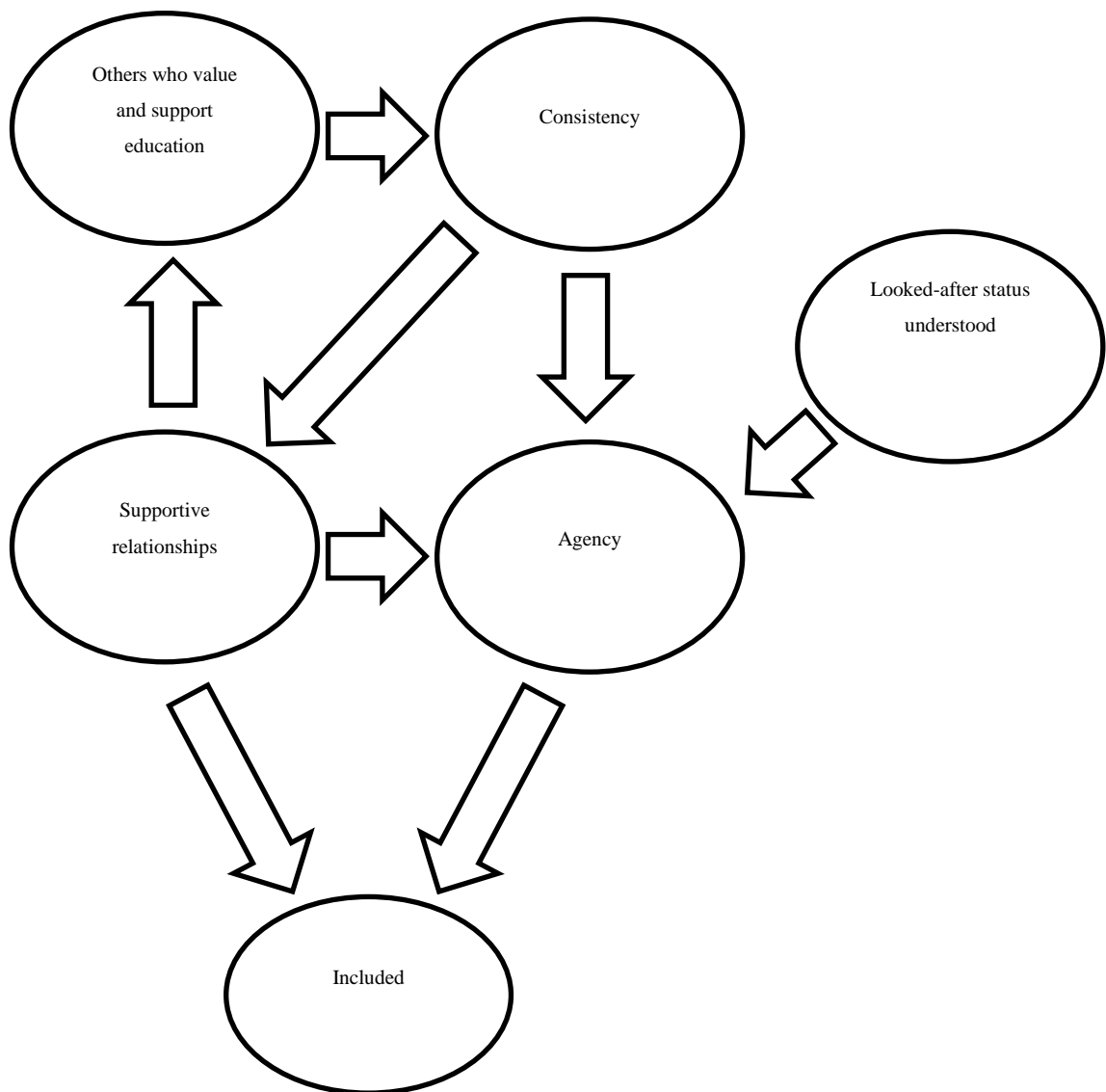
1.5 DISCUSSION

A model of the influences that support the inclusion in schools of looked-after children has been developed using the views of those with first-hand experience of being in care.

1.5.1 LINKS TO OTHER MODELS

The themes that resulted from the meta ethnography seem to map reasonably well onto those identified as being required for intrinsic motivation in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). *Agency* is similar to the concept of autonomy, *supportive relationships* is similar to the concept of relatedness, while aspects of *others who value and support education* could be said to link to the concept of competence.

One model used by Howell (2012) to structure their interview questions applied the ideas of self-determination theory to a sense of belonging in school (Waters et al., 2009). Waters et al. (p. 521) stated that:

> "Connectedness to school can be thought of as a function of the dynamic interactions between individuals and their social and ecological environments. Connectedness to school is therefore the extent to which students feel autonomous yet supported, competent in all they attempt and related to adults and peers."

It is interesting that the model developed from the line of argument particularly highlighted *agency* and *supportive relationships* as the themes which most directly influenced feelings of inclusion. This particularly resonates with the "autonomous yet supported" concept in the above quote. This in turn is also reminiscent of the concept interpreted about the young people wanting to be treated the same as their peers but also recognising the benefit of extra support.

The themes are also reminiscent of the model put forward by McMillan and Chavis (1986) to do with a psychological sense of community (see page 5). The element 'influence' is similar to the theme of *agency*. The element 'shared emotional connection' is similar to *supportive relationships*. 'Integration and fulfilment of needs' is similar to some aspects of *others who support and value education*. The fourth element, membership, could be said only to arise where there is *consistency*.

It was particularly interesting to note that the theme *looked-after status understood* did not emerge from the most recent studies (Driscoll, 2011; Howell, 2012). It may be that there has been an improvement in this area over the last few years as a result of new policy such as the use of designated teachers, as required under The Children and Young Persons Act (2008).

In the time since the meta-ethnography was conducted, a study by Sugden (2013) was published which looked at young looked-after children's perceptions of what supports them to learn in school. While not focused on inclusion, one of the three super-ordinate themes which he interpreted from their views was 'a place where I am accepted', which included subordinate themes to do with belonging, community and relationships. The other two super-ordinate themes resonated with the current study too: 'a place where I

can make choices' is reminiscent of the *agency* theme, while 'a place which personalises learning' shares similarities with *others who value and support education.*

1.5.2 LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There was a tension throughout the synthesis above between wanting to do something that might benefit members of a vulnerable group whilst also not wanting to treat them as defined by their group membership, or homogenous in any way. This tension was made even more salient when it became clear that the strongest message coming from the meta-ethnography was about young people not wanting to be seen as ontologically different from their peers because of the label. Paradoxically, in order for this message to come through so strongly, a large proportion of participants must have felt the same way. The nature of synthesis may have homogenised their opinions or silenced less dominant stories, and some difference may have been lost. Alternatively, perhaps the overwhelming focus on validity in some of the source studies, as opposed to an acceptance of competing identities, resulted in or contributed to a silencing of alternative stories. A further alternative is that the experience of being in care in fact does have elements that are common to many looked-after children such as being objectified. Regardless, it has produced useful ideas concerning ways of supporting the inclusion of young people who are looked-after.

It is recognised that neither this model nor any theoretical model could possible represent the richness, variety and complexity of all the conflicting and contradicting experiences of all looked-after children. It may resonate with some young people's experiences however, and can be seen as a useful starting point for thinking about how to support looked-after children's inclusion in schools en masse, for example at a policy level. At an individual level it might have use as a framework for investigating how a looked-after child might like to be more supported in school.

While this literature review aimed to foreground the voices of looked-after young people, it was conducted by someone who was not looked-after. It would be worthwhile exploring the model developed with some looked-after young people to see how well it resonates with their experiences.

It would also be interesting in future to think of how the focus population of a meta-ethnography might be involved in the process. Previous studies have trained young people as researchers so that they can research their own population (e.g. McLaughlin

(2002)). It may be possible to train young people in the methods of meta-ethnography too.

Future research may also want to investigate the relative importance of these influences, or use them as a framework to design or evaluate an intervention aimed at improving the inclusion of looked-after children in schools.

1.5.3 CONCLUSION

A way of improving the relatively poor outcomes for looked-after children would be improving inclusion in schools for this population. In this meta-ethnography the views and experiences of looked-after children have been interpreted in order to develop a model of the interrelating factors that support their inclusion in schools. Five main factors have been identified: 'agency', 'supportive relationships', 'consistency', 'others who support and value education' and 'looked-after status understood'. These have been discussed in relation to models of inclusion, belonging and community. The strongest message that came from the meta-ethnography was the young people's desire not to be seen or treated as ontologically different from their peers. They nonetheless also wanted support in the form of the five factors identified. These should therefore be delivered in a way that does not add to their sense of difference.

2 BRIDGING DOCUMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to describe the context and professional narrative of my journey as an applied psychologist and researcher. The aim is to explain why I chose the approach that I did in the meta-ethnography and how the empirical study came about as a result of my meta-ethnography, context and the practicalities of real-world research.

Consideration is also given to how the research might have looked if approached from different frameworks and how the research has influenced me.

2.2 RESEARCHER'S BACKGROUND

Some brief information about my professional background is important for understanding the context of this thesis.

As an undergraduate, I studied physics. After this and prior to studying psychology I worked with students who had been given a diagnosis of an autism spectrum condition. While employed in this capacity, I developed a realisation that the label 'autism' that had been given to the children with whom I worked was not useful, as the children were as variable and unique as any other group. I noticed that those who found the construct useful tended to treat the students as autistic primarily and individuals secondarily. I felt that by focusing on their individualities, I was able to develop more genuine, trusting relationships with some of them, and that this enabled me to effect positive change in the lives of the children. From my time in this job I learnt to strongly value a child-centred way of working, to believe in relationships as key to effecting change and to question realist assumptions about labels that are applied to people, although I would not have been able to express these learnings as coherently at the time.

The psychology course which I studied was implicitly underpinned by positivist assumptions. We had training in statistical methods and undertook several small pieces of statistical research before our dissertations, whereas there was only a very brief module on qualitative methods, which felt tokenistic and undervalued. I completed a quantitative dissertation due to feeling unqualified to use qualitative methods and, having not been encouraged to be reflective or think about epistemology, perhaps unquestioningly valued quantitative methods higher than qualitative methods.

After completing the psychology diploma, I was employed to teach statistical research methods at the same university. I therefore came to the doctorate with skills in quantitative research methods but minimal experience of qualitative research methods. I also came with an unconscious and unquestioned positivist approach.

2.3   Epistemology

I feel I have undergone a lengthy and challenging journey in the development of an understanding of my epistemology. At first I felt that this journey was an almost tectonic shift in my beliefs about the world and what can be known. I now believe that the journey was more a process of 'trying on' a variety of epistemologies, particularly those that implicitly appeared more highly valued on the doctorate, before returning to near where I started with a greater ability to verbalise and justify this epistemology.

This journey has been made more difficult by confusion over the meaning of terms such as 'social constructionism' (Burr, 2003, 2007; Gergen & Gergen, 2004) and 'critical realism' (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 2013; Bhaskar, 2010), which have seemed to mean different things to different people I have talked to and so, like many other labels, have not been useful. Another difficulty was that I feel that different epistemologies apply to different types of knowledge, and this is incompatible with being able to apply a single label to 'my epistemology'. For example, while I still feel that a Popperian empiricist, hypothetico-deductivist approach is appropriate for investigating the properties of the physical world, which I believe to be objective, I don't see it as appropriate for investigating mental phenomena, which are subjective.

As should be clear from the above, I believe in an independent, physical reality independent of human minds. The self-evident existence of qualia prevents me from reducing mental or social phenomena to mere physical processes, but nor do I accept any particular solution to the mind-body problem.

I believe that some views of the world are more accurate representations of reality than others, and I have beliefs about what is true about the world.

I take a critical realist approach to psychology in that I believe that people have real internal worlds, but that these are not necessarily unproblematically accessible to others, coherent or consistent. I do not believe that social interaction is always necessary for change to occur in these internal worlds. I take a social constructionist approach to some psychology in that I believe that the discourses and metaphors that we use to talk about

ourselves and our experiences may be at least partially socially constructed. However, non-linguistic mental phenomena such as perception and emotion do not always involve language, it is possible to think and feel without language, and I therefore don't see how such internal phenomena can be in any way socially constructed.

2.4 METHODOLOGY

2.4.1 WHY USE META-ETHNOGRAPHY?

Part of the desire to conduct a qualitative literature review, with an intention to follow this with a qualitative empirical study as well, was a feeling that I should use the thesis as an opportunity to widen my research skills. Mostly, however, it was a result of having come to value individuals' truths higher than generalisations. This was through questioning positivist assumptions that had been implicit in my earlier psychology diploma. I can now see how this resonates with the way I had felt about the label 'autism' when I was working in schools, a feeling that was ignored when confronted by the expert knowledge of psychology lecturers. Much of this thinking can perhaps be best summed up using the language of narrative therapy: valuing thick stories higher than thin ones (Morgan, 2000).

I believe that each looked-after child may have views on what supports their inclusion in schools, and that these will be based on their own experiences rather than being social constructs. Understanding that some views of the world are more accurate representations of reality than others, it was possible to recognise that looked-after children would have greater expertise than I do in what it means to be looked-after. I also believe, however, that there could be no final 'truth' about what all looked-after children think supports their inclusion in schools, as beliefs will be contradictory between and even within children. This was problematic when presented with the requirement to achieve some kind of synthesis in the literature review. I was forced to accept some silencing of minority and dissenting voices, and emphasise that the model would not be representative of all looked-after children's experiences, but could perhaps be used as a guide.

The studies included had already interpreted the views of participants and, in some cases more than others, already homogenised the ideas expressed. Further interpretation of the data through a meta-ethnography (Dixon-Woods, Agarwal, Jones, Young, & Sutton, 2005) was seen as a useful way produce new knowledge.

2.4.2 FROM META-ETHNOGRAPHY TO EMPIRICAL STUDY

I wanted to carry out participatory research due to a strongly held feeling that children are experts in their own lives (Danby & Farrell, 2004). Therefore, while I was keen to use a qualitative approach, I did not want to be an interviewer – it seemed vital if such an approach were to be used that young people interview one-another. This was also due to the fact that I have never been in care and am therefore more of an outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) than looked-after interviewers would be. Looked-after children interviewing each other would be more likely to also use language and ask questions that were relevant to one-another than I would (Alderson, 2008).

After investigating various possibilities, it became clear that many of my options were limited due to having chosen to research with looked-after children. The scarcity of such children within the local authority, coupled with an expected difficulty in accessing them (Heptinstall, 2000), had limiting consequences on possible projects. Any project which required young people to meet would require a pre-existing group or the ability to arrange for young people to meet. I investigated the latter option, but discovered that transport logistics and cost for such a project were unworkable.

The pre-existing group with whom I did work could instead have conducted peer interviews. However, this would have likely required more time for training than was available. Moreover, it seemed more exclusionary than developing a questionnaire that could be open to those who were not willing to participate in such a group.

Valuing the use of participatory methods higher than the use of qualitative methods, I decided that the next best option was for people with experience of being looked-after to design a questionnaire for others.

This presented an epistemological dilemma; how to conduct a quantitative questionnaire in a way that fitted with my views on validity? I realised that quantitative methods could be used outside of a positivist framework. Understanding that my model could never represent all looked-after children's experiences, I nonetheless believed it could be a useful metaphor for thinking about some, possibly a majority, of looked-after children's experiences. In that case, it would be best if it were explored with some looked-after children or care leavers to see if it resonates with their experiences, so that it might best reflect the most experiences possible.

For the purpose of this empirical study, the names of some themes used in the model were changed to make them more easily understandable by anyone who had not read the meta-ethnography. The new labels were developed by revisiting the constituents of each theme to ensure that they were equally as appropriate and representative as the original labels. The old and new labels are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 The original labels for the themes derived from the meta-ethnography and those used in the focus groups

Original label	New label
Agency	Treated as an individual, not a label
Supportive relationships	Having supportive relationships
Consistency	Consistency (no change)
Others who value and support education	People who value education and help with school
Looked-after status understood	People understanding what being looked-after really means
Included	Included (no change)

2.4.3 *WHAT COUNTS AS DATA?*

This was a particularly interesting issue on which I reflected during the research process. I had obtained informed consent before the focus groups for the collection and analysis of data from these groups. The focus on consent for audio recording on these forms may have suggested to participants that only the audio recordings would be analysed. I also explained to participants in the groups that the physical products they produced in the groups would be used. However, I turned the audio recorder off for a halfway break during each session, and of course at the end of each session. The turning-off of the audio recorder may have signalled to participants that this was not data-collection time. Furthermore, topics of conversation during these times naturally turned away from the research to topics of general interest to the participants. During these breaks, however, I had some very interesting conversations with participants and the group's facilitators that were relevant to the research. Feeling that these conversations were not seen as part of the research, I didn't feel that I could include them in this thesis. The only time I have referred to them is a reference to a conversation that highlighted for me that important aspects of participants' identities were being ignored by the focus of the research being on their looked-after status. I specifically asked the participant concerned about whether they were happy for me to refer to this conversation, having outlined what I wanted to say about it, to which they consented verbally. This was a micro-ethical moment (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Renold,

Holland, Ross, & Hillman, 2008) that had not been predicted in an application for ethical approval, highlighting the importance of ethical reflectivity.

2.5 REFLEXIVITY

Willig (2013) claimed that researchers must consider how their own beliefs, experience and values have shaped the research process. It is also important to reflect on how the framing of the research question and the methods used have influenced the results that have been constructed. This is a vast area, so within the confines of this document, only a few issues that are of most interest to me will be discussed.

I have already reflected in this bridging document on how my beliefs, experience and values shaped the research process. They may also have more directly influenced what themes were found. I aimed to avoid letting my biases influence the research overmuch by foregrounding the views expressed by the young people and the findings in the literature rather than letting my background influence the way that results were interpreted. However, meta-ethnography is an interpretative process (Britten et al., 2002; Noblit & Hare, 1988; Savin-Baden & Major, 2007). It is inevitable that the researcher's bias will influence the final interpretation. I must reflect that self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b) has always resonated with me and I find it a useful framework. I have also reflected extensively previously on the necessity to see past labels and see people as individuals. Furthermore, at the time of conducting and writing the meta-ethnography I was greatly interested in intersubjectivity (Marková, 2003a; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001) and was using Video Interaction Guidance (Kennedy, Landor, & Todd, 2011) often in my practice. I wonder whether it is a coincidence that the two most direct influences on inclusion in the model turned out to be 'agency'/'treated as an individual, not a label' and 'supportive relationships'.

I consider in the empirical research report (Section 3) how the framing of the research question and the methods used may have influenced the results that have been constructed. Some alternatives that could have been undertaken will be considered now.

Much discussion has been given to the tension between wanting to work for the best for looked-after children whilst also not seeing them as defined by their group membership. The importance of this was highlighted by the finding that so often young people mentioned something to do with not wanting to be seen as ontologically different from their peers. This finding was incorporated in the 'agency'/'treated as an individual, not a

label' theme. Nonetheless, I undertook research on and with looked-after children, implicitly defining them by their group membership. I endeavoured to see past this label, but the act of undertaking this research may have added to their sense of otherness. It would have been difficult to avoid this without choosing not to have looked-after children specifically as a focus of the research. Perhaps a series of case studies or interviews could have been conducted instead which treated young people as individuals and specifically asked them how the label 'looked-after' had influenced their lives and added to their sense of difference. This might have at least made this tension explicit and, using narrative means (Morgan, 2000; White, 2007), could have externalised the label for them. This might have made it more evident to the young people that they were not being defined by their group membership. A further benefit of this approach is that the data could also have been analysed without attempting to provide any synthesis or generalisations about looked-after children.

Rather than claiming that individual's understandings of the world are more valuable and valid than generalisations, at the other extreme of the universalism-relativism spectrum I could have conducted a purely quantitative literature review. I could have believed that looked-after children are somehow ontologically different to other children, and that there is a final truth about what best supports them. I could have then conducted a meta-analysis of research on interventions used to support looked-after children's inclusion in school. This would have foregrounded expert knowledge before looked-after children's knowledge of their lives. Not only do I believe that this would this have generated less useful knowledge; it would also have reinforced the thinking that looked-after children are ontologically different to their peers, that experts know more about them than they do themselves and that they are objects from which information can be extracted rather than subjects who can contribute to the knowledges generated about them.

2.5.1 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The research process has changed me in various ways. It has helped me to come to better understand and be able to describe my epistemology. It has also further confirmed and made more explicit to me my desire to see past labels. It has further convinced me of the importance of rich and thick descriptions in people's lives as opposed to thin stories (Morgan, 2000; White, 2007). It has given me a new metaphor for thinking about this kind of thinking: using glass labels, as explored in the discussion section of the empirical study. This particularly resonated with me because I had been struggling with

the tension between my desire to see past labels to the individuals they obscure and my recognition that some labels can be useful. This is a metaphor I will extend beyond thinking only about looked-after children.

I also feel that prior to this thesis, while I felt ethically and epistemologically drawn to research at the level of individuals, such as case studies or individual interviews, I did not see this research as being as useful as research which led to generalisations and grand, overarching theories. This view was challenged by reading the studies included in the meta-ethnography and finding the rich descriptions in studies such as McKay (2006) more useful than the thin stories generated in other studies. The more studies foregrounded participants' own stories rather than interpreting them, and in the process of doing so thinning them, the more enlightening I found the study.

Something I had to learn was to accept the limitations placed on the resarch by the pragmatics of time and the interests of stakeholders, which resulted in feeling a lack of agency in the research. Much of conducting of the meta-ethnography and data collection for the empirical study also inconveniently coincided with a time when I was feeling particularly low self-efficacy in the placement component of the doctorate. Keeping motivated when feeling a lack of agency and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b) in the research process as a result of these factors was a challenge. Managing the emotions involved in real-world work was not something that general research textbooks seemed to touch on, despite research being an emotional journey as well as an academic one (Bloor, Fincham, & Sampson, 2008; Carter & Delamont, 1996; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2009; Gilbert, 2001; Kleinman, 1991), and this almost certainly impacting on the research process and decisions made. Perhaps this is linked to the emphasis placed on the need to be able to coherently justify every decision that has been made in the research process, where the decision as to what type of justifications are acceptable may be a value-laden one. Purely rational explanations are likely valued higher than those influenced by emotions, perhaps due to the desire to emulate the objectivity of the natural sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

2.6 CONCLUSION

This bridging document has attempted to provide some context and narrative to the research. The aim was to explain why I chose the approach that I did in the meta-ethnography and how the empirical study came about as a result of my meta-ethnography, context and the practicalities of real-world research.

Consideration was also given to how the research might have looked if approached from different frameworks and how the research has influenced me.

EXPLORING AND IMPROVING A MODEL OF THE FACTORS THAT SUPPORT THE INCLUSION OF LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

3.1 ABSTRACT

This empirical study aimed to provide support for and develop a model of the influences that interrelate to support the inclusion in schools of looked-after children. This model had emerged from an earlier meta-ethnography which synthesised previous research on the views of looked-after children and care leavers.

This study used focus groups of young people with first-hand experience of the care system to explore the model further and develop a questionnaire for care leavers and looked-after children on their experiences in schools.

The questionnaire was conducted and regression analyses used to determine which factors predicted feelings of inclusion and one-another.

Support was found for most aspects of the model. The importance of being treated as an individual and not a label, ontologically different to other children, was found to be most important.

Implications for supporting looked-after children are discussed. In particular, the need for a philosophical shift is described. This shift must redirect professionals' objectifying gaze from looked-after children to the label 'looked-after'.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

The aims of this empirical study were to develop a model of influences on the inclusion of looked-after children in schools and to find out if the model resonated with the experiences of looked-after children and care leavers. The study therefore aimed to answer the following research question: Does the model resonate with the experiences of looked-after children and care leavers and which themes were the most important for developing feelings of inclusion in schools for these people?

This introduction briefly introduces the term 'looked-after children', then describes the model to be developed and provides a rationale for the empirical study reported here by critiquing the model and introducing the concept of participatory methods.

3.2.1 LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN AND INCLUSION

The term 'looked-after' was introduced by The Children Act (1989) to refer to children in public care. Children are labelled looked-after when their parents are temporarily or permanently unable to provide continuing care for them, and the local authority assumes parental responsibility for the child.

Outcomes for children looked-after by local authorities are, on average, poor compared to those of their peers who are not in public care. These include educational outcomes (Department for Education, 2012; Meltzer et al., 2003; Wade & Dixon, 2006). Dent and Cameron (2003, p. 3) said of children in public care that "there are very few groups in contemporary society who exhibit so many of the indicators of social exclusion (homeless, jobless and friendless) as these children and young people so frequently do."

The Children Act, section 22C(8)(b) (together with associated Regulations) requires that local authorities do not disrupt the child's education and training when making a placement decision. However, looked-after children still experience more school changes than their peers (Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), 2009). They also tend to be permanently excluded from schools more frequently than their peers who are not in public care (Department for Education, 2012).

The Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1994) and more recently the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), have called on governments to provide inclusive education for all. The European Convention on Human Rights, which is now embodied in UK law as part of the Human Rights Act, also mentions the right to not be denied an education.

A sense of belonging has been described as a basic human need (Maslow, 1943; Osterman, 2000) and has been associated with improved psychological outcomes and mental health (Baumeister, 2005; Shochet et al., 2011). Ryan and Deci (2000b, p. 68) described relatedness (the universal desire to interact, be connected to, and experience caring for others) as one of three factors which "when satisfied yield enhanced self-motivation and mental health and when thwarted lead to diminished motivation and well-being".

A sense of belonging and connectedness might be particularly important for looked-after children, who may be more likely to have problems with family relationships (Hutchinson, 2011), a traditional source of a sense of belonging. Feeling included, and therefore accepted, in school may be an alternative route to meeting these needs (Leeson, 2007; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

3.2.2 *THE MODEL TO BE EXPLORED*
The model, shown in Figure 3.1, was the result of an earlier meta-ethnography which had interpreted studies on the views of looked-after children and care leavers about what supports the inclusion of looked-after children in schools.

Figure 3.1 A model of the factors that support the inclusion of looked-after children in schools, with factors renamed to be more easily understood.
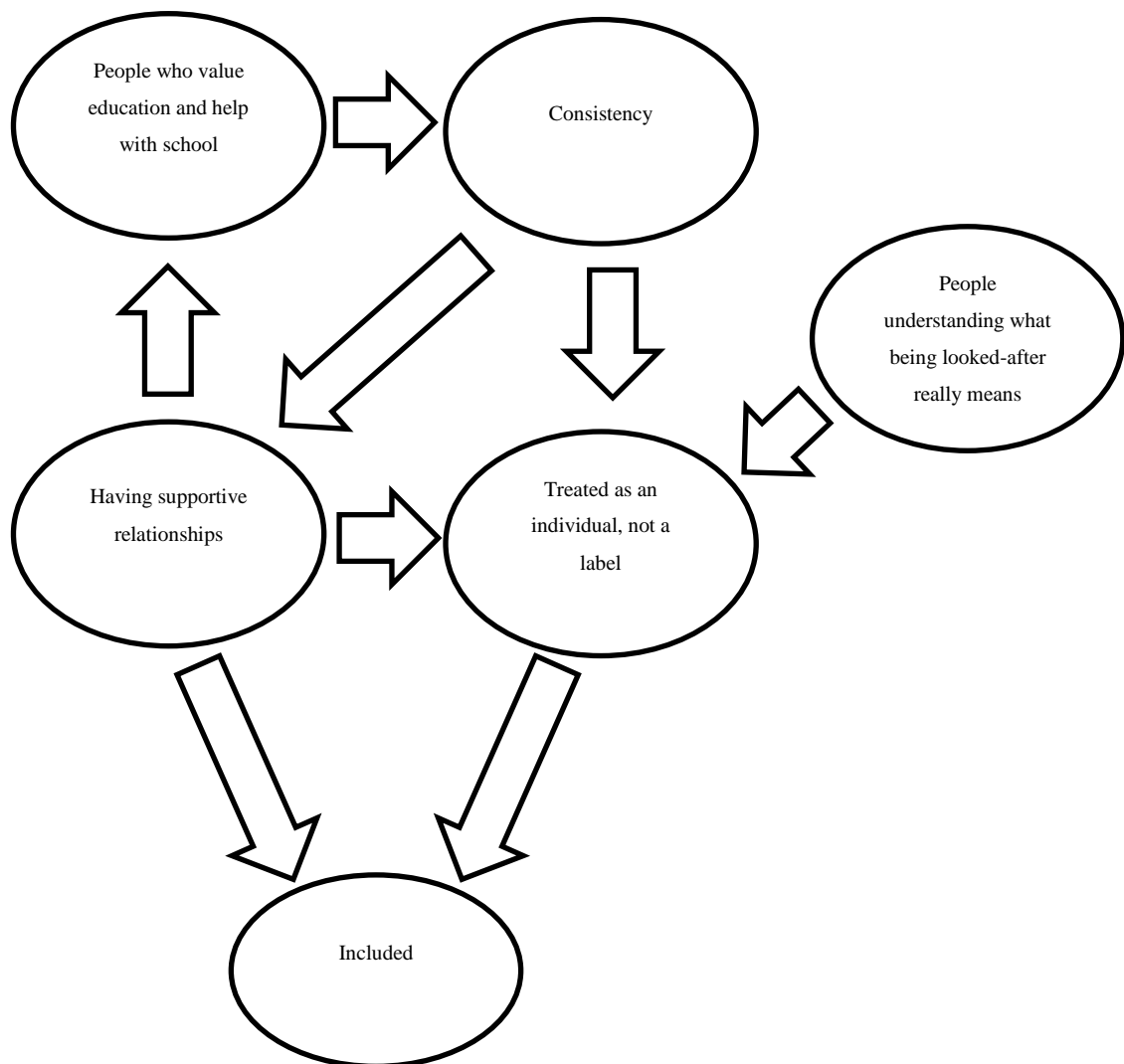
The model requires some explanation, so the remainder of this section describes the themes and their relationships to one-another. Looked-after children could feel more included in schools if people could see past the label 'looked-after' and see them as individuals. This could be aided by adults and peers having a greater understanding of what it means to be looked-after.

Looked-after children might feel more included in schools if they were given more opportunities to experience supportive relationships. Experiencing authentic, supportive relationships could also help looked-after children to feel treated as individuals. They may be more able to accept support and encouragement from people in such relationships.

Such support and encouragement regarding education may enable young people to attend school more often, which in turn may enable the young person to feel normal due to their differences not being highlighted to others. This may prevent objectification and promote feeling treated like an individual. It might also improve consistency in the young person's life.

Consistency can be important in all areas of life. It could reduce anxiety and improve concentration at school. Consistency in relationships may enable such relationships to become more authentic, trusting, caring and supportive.

3.2.3 RATIONALE FOR THE CURRENT STUDY

Participatory methods

Throughout the research process, the insider/outsider metaphor (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) has been a useful tool to aid reflection and reflexivity. As psychological research is conducted by humans on humans, all researchers are to some extent insiders. However, not being part of the group under investigation makes researchers outsiders. The model was developed by an outsider, who interpreted studies which had interpreted the views of looked-after children, so it was seen as important to bring the results back to looked-after children and care leavers.

All people have a right to participate in decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them (van der Riet, 2008). Hart (1992) developed a model of participation which places participatory approaches on eight rungs of a ladder from manipulation, through tokenism, to research initiated by young people in which decisions are shared equally between adults and young people. The research question meant that the research was not able to be completely child-initiated. Nonetheless, Hart's model was borne in mind when designing the research. A trade-off was often required between desire for greater participation/empowerment and the pragmatics of time and funding. This will be elaborated upon in the discussion.

It can be argued that participatory methods, if used as a technique, can be as dominating as any other method, but that children can always exercise their agency through resistance and subversion (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008; Gallagher, 2008). This view sees power less as a commodity to be given to children and more as an action. From this perspective, ethical practice when conducting research with children is less about handing power over to them and more about avoiding using one's authority to dominate or prevent children's acts of resistance and subversion. Researchers must therefore be

open to following participants' agendas (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Participants should be viewed as collaborators in a dialogue rather than mere sources of data (van der Riet, 2008).

A two-stage research process
While the model suggests which of the themes interrelate, it does not specify the strength of these relationships between factors. Which factors predict one-another more or less strongly would, when included in the model, help to identify implications and recommendations for means of intervening to improve the inclusion of looked-after children in schools. This justifies the use of a questionnaire and quantitative analysis

The research was therefore conducted in two stages. Focus groups explored the model and then developed a questionnaire based on the newly adapted model. This questionnaire was then delivered online. In order to clarify the research process, a model of the journey from literature review to this empirical study's results is presented in Figure 3.2. It demonstrates how the results from each stage informed the next stage.

Figure 3.2 A model of the research process
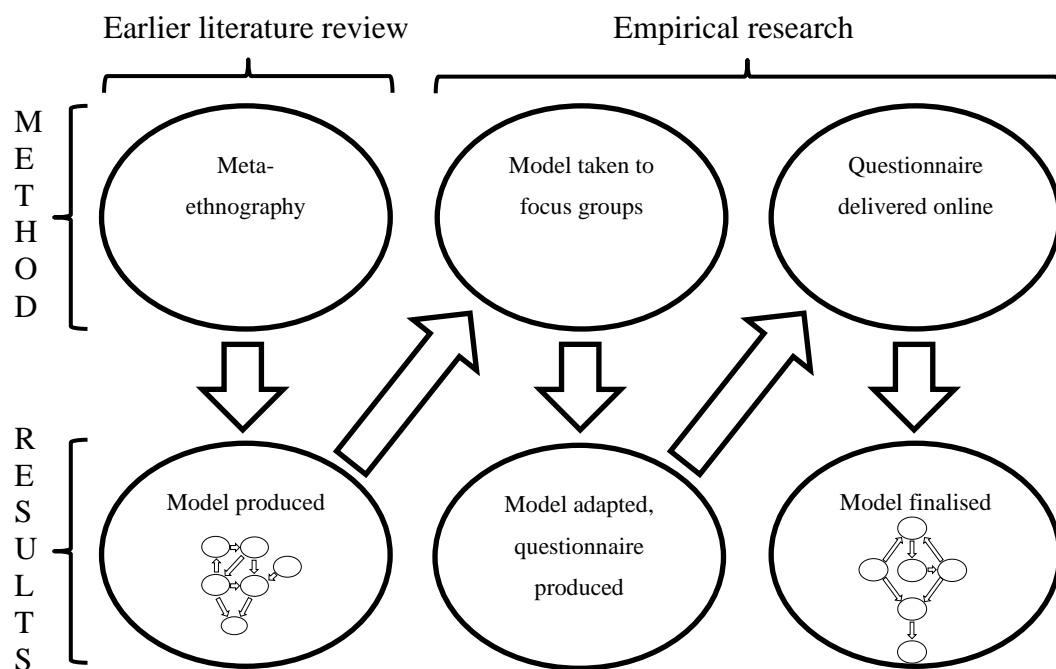
The following sections describe the methods and results used in this empirical study. The method used and results for the focus groups are described first so that the

following section, which concerns the method used and results for the questionnaire, can be more easily understood.

3.3   STAGE ONE: FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Groups were used to elicit the views of young people with experience of the care system on the model to be explored. Focus groups were chosen as they are an efficient method of collecting qualitative data (Robson, 1993). The interactional nature of focus groups dynamics also tend to lead to richer data than interviews alone, as to some extent the insider participants are interviewing one-another, lessening the effects of outsider researcher bias (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Robson, 1993). The focus groups were also used to design a questionnaire for care leavers.

3.3.1   METHOD

Participants

The focus groups consisted of volunteers from a local, pre-existing, Children in Care Council. Five young people attended the first session. Information about them is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Information about focus group participants

Sex	Age	At school	In care	Sessions attended		
				1	2	3
Male	24	No	Care leaver	✓	✓	✓
Female	21	No	Care leaver	✓	✗	✓
Female	17	Yes	Looked-after	✓	✗	✗
Female	16	Yes	Looked-after	✓	✓	✓
Female	15	Yes	Looked-after	✓	✓	✓

Ethical issues

Ethical issues are more than procedures (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Renold et al., 2008) but procedural ethics are important to ensure the safeguarding of participants. Therefore ethical approval for the project was sought and received from Newcastle University. Opt-in consent forms were used for the focus groups. Participants who were sixteen years old or older were able to provide informed consent for themselves (Appendix A, page 72). Those under sixteen required consent from a social worker, carer and birth parents if they were in contact with them (Appendix B, page 74).

To ensure that consent was informed, a presentation was given to the Children in Care Council about the results of the meta-ethnography and explaining what the research

would involve. Consent forms were then left with the members of the council and the facilitators. There may still have been a power imbalance and individuals may have felt that there was an obligation to consent (Creswell, 2003). This could, for example have resulted from adult-child power differences or as a result of feeling that it was necessary in order to remain part of the pre-existing group. Participants were therefore repeatedly reminded that they could withdraw at any point and reminded of the nature of the research (Coolican, 2013). One of the group's adult facilitators was present throughout the focus groups for safeguarding purposes, although silent and separated physically from the table around which participants worked.

Procedure

Three 90-minute focus groups were conducted and audio-recorded. An outline of each session is given briefly in Table 3.2. A more detailed description is given in Appendix C (page 79).

Table 3.2 Focus group sessions outline

Session	Aims	Procedure
One	- Getting to know one-another. - Introduce the research. - Explore and develop the model.	- Icebreaker. - Discuss ground rules. - Discuss feelings about, understanding of, and possible directions for the research. 'Inclusion' mind map (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). - Pile sorting activity (Colucci, 2007) for each theme. - Ranking the top four concepts for each theme.
Two	Use the model as a framework to explore what could practically be done differently in schools.	- Reminder of focus of research and ground rules. - Person Centred Planning (PCP) (Moran, 2001, 2006) tool used to explore participants' experiences of the six themes in schools.
Three	Develop a questionnaire.	- Reminder of focus of research and ground rules. - Explanation and discussion of relevant aspects of questionnaire design. - Writing items in pairs – the top four concepts in each theme were turned into items to measure that theme. - Discussion about structure and layout, introductory paragraphs, who should be asked to participate and what open-ended and other questions should be asked.

3.3.2 RESULTS

Whilst useful qualitative data was gathered during the focus groups, there is not the scope to analyse it here. The main aim was the development of a questionnaire, which is described here.

A number of concepts were moved to new themes in session one. Table 3.3 shows all the constituent concepts for each theme and the new concepts that were added to each theme. A large number of concepts were placed in multiple themes.

Table 3.3 The original themes with their constituent concepts and the concepts that were added to each theme

Theme	Original constituents	Additional constituents
Treated as an individual, not a label	• ~~You are made to feel normal~~ (rephrased as "not being made to feel different") • People respect your privacy • Your individuality is recognised • Being asked for your opinion about decisions that affect your life • Being given information • Making your own decisions • Getting to choose who knows what about you • Not being stigmatised • Joint setting of targets at school • Opinions acted on • You are given real responsibility • You are not singled out anywhere	• Having someone who accepts you no matter what • Having someone who listens and understands without making you feel 'different' • High academic expectations • Successes in school are noticed • Adults who get to know you as an individual • Knowing someone who listens confidentially
Having supportive relationships	• Having a special relationship with someone who is genuine, caring and trusting. • Having a mentor or role-model • Adults who get to know you as an individual • Having someone who listens and understands without making you feel 'different' • Having friends • Someone who makes time to listen and make you feel valued • Someone who forms a close bond with you • Knowing someone who listens confidentially • Having someone who accepts you no matter what • A relationship with someone chosen by you	• Opinions acted on • One mentor who sticks with you • Knowing others who regret doing badly at school • Understanding from peers • Friends who do well in school • Encouraging teachers • Adults who have known you a long time • Less change and uncertainty so you don't worry at school • Extra support from teachers (academic and emotional) • Getting to choose who knows what about you • Being asked for your opinion about decisions that affect your life
Consistency	• Always working with the same professional • Not changing schools • One mentor who sticks with you • Less change and uncertainty so you don't worry at school • Placement moves should be outside term-time • Not changing placement • Regularly attending school • Adults who have known you a long time • School changes make others aware of differences	• Being given information • Friends who do well in school

Theme	Original constituents	Additional constituents
People who value education and help with school	- People who are enthusiastic about education and take an interest - Encouraging teachers - High academic expectations - Friends who do well in school - Successes in school are noticed - Knowing others who regret doing badly at school	- Placement moves should be outside term-time - Joint setting of targets - Less change and uncertainty so you don't worry at school - Extra support from teachers (academic and emotional)
People understanding what being looked-after really means	- People know about the difficulties you might have faced or be facing - Teachers getting training on what it means to be looked-after - Schools bend the rules for you - High academic expectations - Extra support from teachers (academic and emotional) - Understanding from peers - Not being stigmatised	- Having someone who listens and understands without making you feel 'different' - Being asked for your opinion about decisions that affect your life

Note: Items that have been struck through are those that originally appeared in a theme but were not placed in that theme by focus group participants.

After this re-theming, the participants were asked to rank the top four most important concepts for each theme. Importance was explained as the concepts that were most important for achieving that theme in schools. Table 3.4 shows the results from this ranking. These most important concepts were to be used as the basis of the questionnaire, which is described in the following section. For the theme *inclusion*, the constituent concepts used for the ranking were those that had been placed on the mind-map earlier in the first focus group. Participants were asked to look at these concepts on the mind map and decide which they felt would be the four most important.

Table 3.4 The most important concepts for each theme, according to focus group participants

Theme	Most important concepts
Treated as an individual, not a label	• Your individuality is recognised • People respect your privacy • Not being made to feel different • Having someone who accepts you no matter what
Having supportive relationships	• Having a special relationship with someone who is genuine, caring and trusting. • Having someone who listens and understands without making you feel 'different' • Someone who forms a close bond with you • A relationship with someone chosen by you
Consistency	• Always working with the same professional • Not changing placement or school • Regularly attending school • Adults who have known you a long time
People who value education and help with school	• People who are enthusiastic about education and take an interest • Encouraging teachers • Successes in school are noticed • Less change and uncertainty so you don't worry at school
People understanding what being looked-after really means	• People know about the difficulties you might have faced or be facing • Teachers getting training on what it means to be looked-after • Understanding from peers • Being asked for your opinion about decisions that affect your life
Inclusion	• Feeling involved • Not feeling lonely • Feeling accepted • Participating

3.4 STAGE TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE

3.4.1 METHOD

Materials

The questionnaire used was developed in the third focus group session. The four most important items identified for each theme in the third focus group session were used. In addition, due to a concern about how well these items measured each theme, a question about each specific theme was included in order to improve the validity when testing for internal consistency. For example, the item "I was treated as a label and not an individual at school" was added to measure the *treated as an individual, not a label* theme.

The questionnaire was piloted and improved (see Appendix D, page 81) using the first responses to come in online. There were two version of the final questionnaire, one for those still at school (see Appendix E, page 83, for paper version or Appendix G, page 95, for online version) and one for school leavers (see Appendix F, page 89, for paper version or Appendix H, page 104, for online version). Each contained thirty items measured on a seven-point Likert scale. Likert scales allow respondents to indicate the

intensity of their attitude towards a statement (Bryman, 2012). With a seven-point scale, respondents could select a middle value, since a forced choice can bias results (Tull & Hawkins, 1993).

The questionnaires also asked for some demographic data, as can be seen on the questionnaires in Appendices E, F, G and H (pages 83, 89, 95 and 104 respectively).

Wanting to make the questionnaire as inclusive as possible, it was made easy to read for a wide spectrum of literacy abilities. It was tested for reading age using two calculators. One suggested it should be readable by the average 8-9 year-old. The other suggested that it should be easily understood by the average 11-12 year-old.

Participants

A pragmatic decision was made to only target those aged sixteen or older who could consent for themselves. Looked-after children and care leavers were targeted.

Due to the paucity of responses from young people still at school, no statistical analysis was possible for this population. Their responses to the open-ended question were included, however.

Sixteen young people who had left school responded to the questionnaire (seven male, nine female). In response to the question "Where did you spend most of your time at school?", fifteen responded "England" while one responded "Scotland". Table 3.5 gives more information about the respondents.

Table 3.5 Questionnaire respondent statistics

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Age	18	45	24.06	8.37
Age entered care	1	16	10.93	3.97
Age left care*	10	18	16.77	2.13
Number of placement changes	0	24	6.25	6.78
Number of school changes	0	24	4.00	5.80

Note: *two respondents were still in care. The numbers in this row refer to the other fourteen respondents.

Procedure

The questionnaire was primarily delivered online.

A link to the questionnaire was given to various organisations, charities and care leaver teams to distribute to any looked-after young people or care leavers older than fifteen.

The questionnaire was offered by some directly to young people with whom they worked. It was also promoted in newsletters and via social media

Reliability Analysis
Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal reliability for each theme. An alpha of 0.7 or higher is generally accepted to demonstrate acceptable internal consistency for psychological constructs (Field, 2009). For *having supportive relationships* ($\alpha = 0.82$), *treated as an individual, not a label* ($\alpha = 0.85$) and *people who value education and help with school* ($\alpha = 0.77$), alpha could not be greatly improved by removing any items.

For each of the other themes, the assumption of no negative covariance was violated. Items were therefore removed to improve the internal reliability. When "I sometimes felt lonely at school" was removed from the *inclusion* theme, alpha was calculated as 0.91.

When "I wasn't often asked for my opinion about decisions that affected my life" and "I didn't have many friends who understood me" were removed from the *people understanding what being looked-after really means theme*, alpha was calculated to be 0.77.

For the *consistency* theme, three items needed to be removed. For the remaining two items ("I went to school every day" and "At school I had someone who stuck with me"), alpha was calculated as 0.75.

Scores were calculated for each theme by taking the mean value of the items that loaded onto that theme for each respondent. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were used to test the normality of the distributions of these scores. None significantly differed from normality.

Correlations
When key explanatory variables are not included in regression analyses, the results of the analysis will be biased and cannot be trusted (Field, 2009). Age, time spent in care, number of placement changes and number of school changes were therefore tested for correlation with the six themes. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicated that number of school changes ($p = 0.003$) and age ($p = 0.003$) were significantly non-normally distributed, while number of placement changes and time in care acceptably approximated a normal distribution. Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated

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for the correlations involving number of school changes and age, while Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated for the others.

Number of school changes significantly correlated negatively with *having supportive relationships* ($r_s = -0.63$, $p = 0.010$), *people who value education and help with school* ($r_s = -0.70$, $p = 0.003$), *treated as an individual and not a label* ($r_s = -0.77$, $p < 0.001$) and *included* ($r_s = -0.66$, $p = 0.006$).

Age was significantly correlated with *included* ($r_s = -0.61$, $p = 0.012$).

Regression Analysis

Five regression analyses were used. Each used a different theme as the outcome variable (it was not necessary to do this for *people understand what being looked-after really means* since the model did not suggest any predictors). In each case the predictors were the themes that the model shown in Figure 3.1 suggests might predict the outcome variable. For example, for the analysis in which *included* was the outcome variable, the predictor variables entered were *having supportive relationships* and *treated as in individual, not a label*. A backward stepwise method was used for all but one of the analyses, as it was preferred that every predictor entered should be used in the model, but since the model was still being explored and developed, if there was a better model that resulted from the exclusion of a predictor, this model was preferred. For the test which used *consistency* as an outcome variable, only one predictor variable was entered, so a forced entry method was used.

The correlation tests showed that the number of school changes experienced correlated significantly with a number of the themes and age correlated with having felt included. It was therefore necessary to include the number of placement changes in any of the analyses in which it correlated with the outcome variable. It was necessary to include age in the model that used *included* as the outcome variable.

No tests violated any assumptions. Results are given in tables from Table 3.6 to Table 3.10.

Table 3.6 Results of the regression analysis for the outcome variable *included*

		B	SE B	β
Step One				
	Constant	0.44	1.57	
	Having supportive relationships	0.44	0.32	0.32
	Treated as an individual, not a label	0.59	0.34	0.49
	Age	-0.04	0.04	-0.17
	Number of school changes	-0.03	0.07	-0.08
Step Two				
	Constant	0.35	1.50	
	Relationships	0.39	0.28	0.28
	Individual	0.68	0.26	0.56*
	Age	-0.04	0.03	-0.19
Step Three				
	Constant	-1.11	1.02	
	Relationships	0.36	0.29	0.26
	Individual	0.79	0.25	0.66**
Step Four				
	Constant	-0.28	0.80	
	Individual	1.03	0.17	0.86***

Note: $R^2 = 0.79$ for step one, $\Delta R^2 = -0.00$ for step two, $\Delta R^2 = -0.03$ for step three, $\Delta R^2 = -0.03$ for step four. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.7 Results of the regression analysis for the outcome variable *treated as an individual, not a label*

	B	SE B	β
Step One			
Constant	1.23	0.90	
Having supportive relationships	0.48	0.21	0.42*
Number of school changes	-0.11	0.04	-0.40*
People understanding what it really means to be looked-after	0.24	0.17	0.27
Consistency	0.08	0.16	0.10
Step Two			
Constant	1.30	0.86	
Having supportive relationships	0.52	0.19	0.45*
Number of school changes	-0.12	0.04	-0.43**
People understanding what it really means to be looked-after	0.27	0.15	0.30
Step Three			
Constant	1.11	0.92	
Having supportive relationships	0.74	0.16	0.65***
Number of school changes	-0.12	0.04	-0.44**

Note: $R^2 = 0.82$ for step one, $\Delta R^2 = -0.00$ for step two, $\Delta R^2 = -0.05$ for step three. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.8 Results of the regression analysis for the outcome variable *having supportive relationships*

	B	SE B	β
Step One			
Constant	3.10	0.92	
Number of school changes	0.01	0.06	0.04
Consistency	0.47	0.17	0.67*
Step Two			
Constant	3.20	0.70	
Consistency	0.45	0.14	0.65**

Note: $R^2 = 0.42$ for step one, $\Delta R^2 = -0.00$ for step two. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 3.9 Results of the regression analysis for the outcome variable *people who value education and help with school*

	B	SE B	β
Step One			
Constant	1.07	0.95	
Number of school changes	-0.09	0.04	-0.36*
Having supportive relationships	0.69	0.17	0.66**

Note: $R^2 = 0.69$ for step one. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 3.10 Results of the regression analysis for the outcome variable *consistency*

	B	SE B	β
Constant	-0.40	0.94	
People who value education and help with school	1.14	0.21	0.83***

Note: $R^2 = 0.69$. *** $p < 0.001$

The results of these tests are summarised in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 The model updated based on the results of the regression analyses

* p < 0.05

** p < 0.01

*** p < 0. 001

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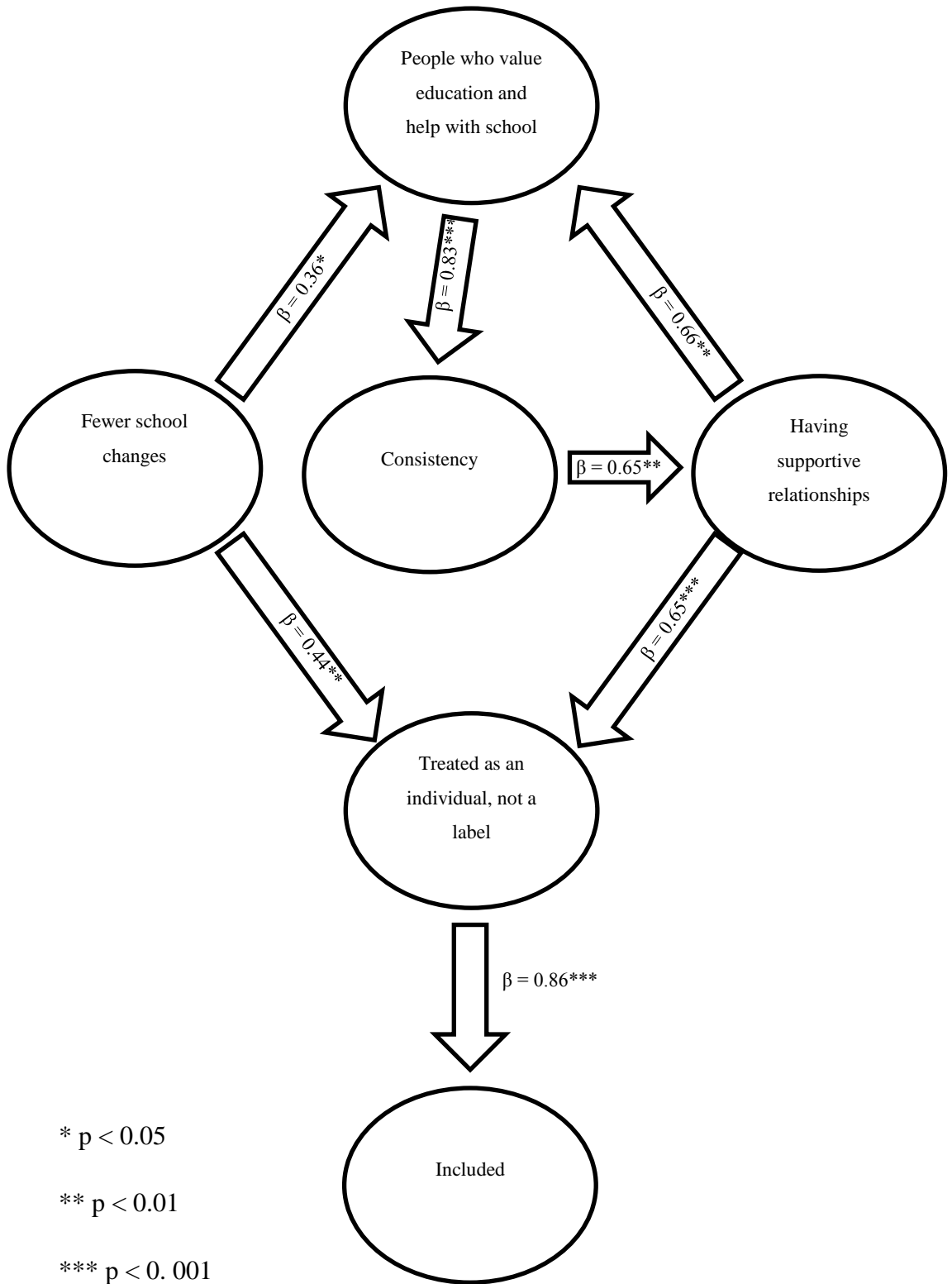
3.5 DISCUSSION

This section summarises and interprets the results, offers some critique of the methodology and considers implications of the final model for schools.

3.5.1 INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

The aim of this study was to extend the model developed in the earlier meta-ethnography and find whether it resonated with people who have experience of being looked-after.

Figure 3.3 shows the themes which were found to significantly predict other themes. Other expected predictive relationships were not found to be significant. Those relationships between themes that were found to be significant represent the aspects of the model which did resonate with the questionnaire's respondents. The earlier meta-ethnography gave detailed reasons why each predictive relationship was expected and these are summarised in Section 3.2.2. The relationships that have been found to be significant can be interpreted as being significant most likely due to those reasons. Explanations for why the others were found to be non-significant are now to be discussed.

Consistency was not found to predict feeing *treated as an individual, not a label*. Number of school changes did, however, predict feeing *treated as an individual, not a label*, which is in keeping with the results from the meta-ethnography. The main reason that *consistency* was expected to predict feeing *treated as an individual, not a label* was that attending school more frequently "may enable the young person to feel normal due to their differences not being highlighted to others. This may prevent objectification and promote agency" (page 22). The *consistency* used in the regression analyses referred to respondents attending school regularly and feeling like someone stuck with them. It may be that changing schools highlights differences more than not attending school every day.

Having supportive relationships did not predict feeling included. This predictive relationship had been expected primarily due to a second-order interpretation interpreted from Howell (2012), that a feeling of connection to school develops from feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness. It could be argued that a feeling of connection to school (Waters et al., 2009) is not the same as feeling included (Booth et al., 2002). Jimerson, Campos, and Greif (2003) highlighted that school connectedness has only affective components. Likewise, Furlong, O'Brennan, and You (2011) claimed that

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school connectedness does not cover academic, behavioural or cognitive engagement. The *inclusion* theme measured in the current study, however, included a behavioural component (the item "I sometimes didn't participate at school"). Furthermore the items "I felt very involved in school" and "I felt very accepted at school" may have measured a cognitive component, an affective component, or both. "I felt very lonely at school", the item that is perhaps the most likely to have measured an affective component, was not included in the analysis in order to improve internal consistency. Therefore, perhaps the items used to measure the *included* theme in this study were measuring a less affective construct than school connectedness, and perhaps whilst *having supportive relationships* may predict an affective feeling of connection to school, they do not directly predict how included someone feels at school, which may be more of a cognitive and behavioural process.

Alternatively, as suggested by the model developed in this thesis, it may be that the relatedness factor supports feelings of connectedness to school and inclusion indirectly, through autonomy, agency or *feeling treated as an individual, not a label*.

People understanding what being looked-after really means was not found to predict anything. It is worth noting here that the average age of the participants was only twenty-four, and also that this theme only emerged from studies from 2006 or earlier and not from two most recent studies (Driscoll, 2011; Howell, 2012). It may be that there has been an improvement in schools regarding people understanding what it means to be looked-after. This improvement may have been large enough for it no longer to be seen as a problem by the younger respondents, perhaps due to the use of designated teachers in schools. Alternatively, the non-significance of this relationship may be a result of the small sample size.

3.5.2 SOME CRITIQUES OF THE METHODOLOGY

Critiques of the use of quantitative questionnaires to investigate people's experiences include that they do not allow for rich responses, there is no 'correct' way to interpret questions, respondents may hold various conflicting ideas, the differences between responses such as "strongly" and "slightly" agreeing are subjective, and it may not be possible to find some final 'truth' about participants' inner worlds that is coherent and uninfluenced by context, delivery and setting (Oppenheim, 1992; Robson, 1993; Savin-Baden & Major, 2007; Scheurich, 1995). This is especially true since the questions

asked about respondents' school experiences. They may have struggled to apply a single response to all of their school experiences.

It would be inadvisable to generalise the results to a larger population due to the small sample size and possible sampling bias. Those who responded were those who had access to the internet and a level of literacy that enabled them to read the questionnaire and respond. Most respondents completed the questionnaire in the days immediately following the times that a link was posted on social media, so it is reasonable to assume that many of the respondents were those following the charitable organisations who posted the link on these websites. This, combined with the fact that they completed the questionnaire, suggests that they may hold strong views on the topic or feel a greater sense of agency. They may not represent all those with experience of the care system.

Consideration was given during the research to the model of children's participation developed by Hart (1992). The research question meant that the research was not able to be completely child-initiated. It would have been preferable for young people to be involved at every stage, as was achieved by McLaughlin (2002). A lack of funding, however, prevented various options. For example, the young people would have been unable to conduct interviews with other young people due to transport costs. Time constraints prevented extensive training in research methods being given. Given more time it would have been desirable to take the findings back to the focus groups and get their perspective on the results (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998).

Despite wanting to avoid essentialist views of looked-after children, and recognising that people have multiple, often conflicting knowledges, identities and beliefs (Bakhtin, 1984; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans et al., 1992; Marková, 2003b), this empirical study has nevertheless somewhat defined participants by their label in making the label a requirement of participation. It has only allowed people to participate in the context of being a looked-after child or care leaver. During unrecorded breaks during and after focus groups, for example, I talked with one participant about other aspects of their life in which their social context was that of being a parent. At other times we discussed their job from a perspective of their professional identity. These identities were not seen as relevant to the research however, and therefore participants may have felt that the only aspect of their identities of interest was their looked-after or care leaver labels (Wilkinson, 1998).

3.5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MODEL

Support has been found for the model developed in the meta-ethnography. It has been refined into the model shown in Figure 3.3. However, while the β values shown in Figure 3.3 are useful when thinking about the specific sample which was used, they may not be generalizable. The final version of the model is therefore presented in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 The finalised model of the influences that interrelate to support the inclusion in schools of looked-after children, based on the views of those with first-hand experience of the care system.
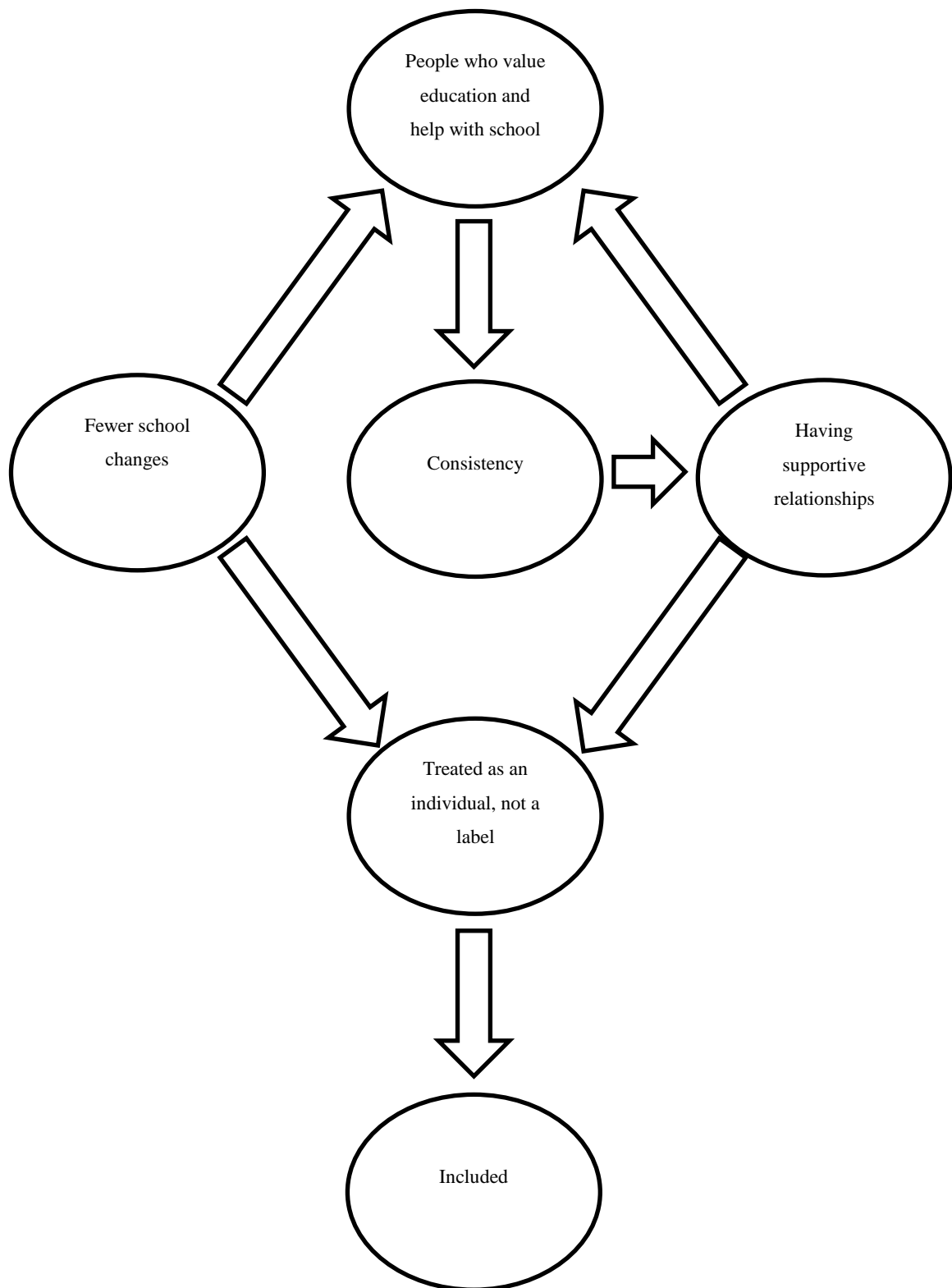
One change in the model that is particularly interesting is in the factors that directly predict feelings of inclusion. The original model had both *agency* and *supportive relationships* predicting feeling included, and a link was thus made to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b). In the new model, only feeling *treated as an individual, not a label*, the theme which *agency* became, predicted inclusion. However, *having supportive relationships* still predicted feeling *treated as an individual, not a label*. This resonates less with self-determination theory and more with models of attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969), in which secure attachments enable people to explore their surroundings and selves, knowing that they will have a safe base to return to should they encounter difficulty.

3.5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

The model suggests that the best way to help looked-after children to feel included is to treat them as individuals rather than seeing only the label. McKay (2006) believed that treating the looked-after status as ontological enables a gaze that highlights differences between looked-after children and their peers, resulting in invasions of their privacy and preventing genuine listening. This led McKay (page 188) to "think of them as "glass children"… because of the sense in which they are so intrusively looked <u>into</u>… they are looked <u>through</u> and their interests subordinated to others"".

The label may be useful for referring to those who are looked-after, but it should be recognised that the label can hide and homogenise a heterogeneous group whose individuality should be foregrounded instead of hidden. The findings from this thesis demonstrate that it is important that the label 'looked-after' is looked <u>through</u> instead, to see the individuals it hides. If we need to use such labels at all, we should have glass labels instead of glass children. Having labels made of glass would also enable them to be intrusively looked <u>into</u>, revealing their flaws, and easily shattered if necessary.

Schools may be encouraged to improve the way they help looked-after children to feel like individuals by returning to look at the constituents of this theme, which can be seen in the first column of Table 1.5, such as selective disclosure and being consulted about decisions which affect their lives. There are many tools for such consultation with children and young people. Person-centred planning (Houston, 2003) might be especially useful in this context as it foregrounds the views of the child. A philosophical shift such as that described in the previous paragraph may, however, be more beneficial than the adoption of any technique (Prout, 2003).

It is the belief of the author that such a philosophical shift is required when thinking about all essentialist labels, not just the label 'looked-after'. Educational Psychologists are well placed to support schools in such a philosophical shift and, through the research journey described in this thesis, has found himself more assertive in challenging essentialist labels and promoting an ethos of recognising and accepting diversity. This has not only been a result of the findings of the thesis, but of an increased feeling of confidence and expertise that has been necessary to challenge the claims to truth of professionals whose authority he would previously have felt unable to challenge.

One way to help looked-after children to feel treated as an individual and not a label is to provide them with supportive relationships within school, and thus potentially help them to feel more included indirectly. It would be best if these relationships could be chosen by the young person themselves. Therefore, whole-school policies on how to provide these kinds of relationships for all children might be the most effective option. This could, for example, again have a person-centred focus, or could focus on effective listening or attuned relationships (Kennedy et al., 2011). According to the model developed in this thesis, attending school regularly is key to the development of such supportive relationships in schools, and one way to encourage this is through the emphasis all adults should place on the inherent value of education.

3.5.5 CONCLUSION

Support was found for many aspects of the model of the influences which support the inclusion in schools of looked-after children. In particular, the importance of being treated as in individual and not a label, ontologically different to other children, was found to be most important. Implications for improving the inclusion of looked-after children in schools have been discussed. Of particular importance are the necessities to look through the label 'looked-after' and to provide supportive relationships for all children. Looking through the label 'looked-after' as though it were made of glass, to see individuals behind it, resolved a tension in the participatory elements of the research; a tension between focusing the research on looked-after children and not wanting to see them defined by their membership of that group.

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5 APPENDICES

Appendix A : CONSENT FORM FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Researching looked-after young people's views on school inclusion

To whom it may concern,

I am trying to find out what looked-after young people think about what helps them feel that they are a part of their schools. I will be sending questionnaires about this to looked-after young people in [Name of local authority removed for confidentiality] in July/August.

I would like some looked-after young people to help me design the questionnaire. If you would like to help me do this, I need your written, informed consent. This will involve three group sessions, each lasting about two hours (17:30 to 19:30) on the following Wednesdays: 26 June, 3 July and 17 July. We will spend time getting to know each other, deciding on some rules, discussing what helps people feel part of their schools, and designing the questionnaire. A member of the participation team [Names removed for confidentiality] will be there for every session. I will record what is said in these sessions using a digital voice recorder. I will use this information, along with the results of the questionnaire to write a report about what looked-after young people in [Name of local authority removed for confidentiality] think helps them feel part of their schools. No names will be mentioned in this report. The recorded information will not be kept once the project is over.

You can change your mind and stop taking park at any point. All information will be kept securely, confidentially and anonymously. Please sign below if you give your consent.

Thank you. For further information on this research please contact John Adrian-Vallance at:

John Adrian-Vallance C/o Lorna Wilson
School of ECLS
King George VI Building
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU

or Louise Tilney (Course Secretary) 0191 222 6568

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
Researching looked-after young people's views on school inclusion
Please return this consent form to ………………………………………………… by 26 June

I wish to participate in a small group that will help people understand looked-after young people's views on what helps them feel a part of their schools.	
I am happy for you to record what I say.	
I am happy for my words to be used in a report and understand that my name will not be mentioned.	

Signature . . . . Date:. . . . .

Appendix B : CONSENT FORMS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Researching looked-after young people's views on school inclusion

To whom it may concern,

I am a postgraduate student from Newcastle University. I am researching the views of looked-after young people on what supports their inclusion in schools. I will be sending questionnaires on this subject to looked-after young people in [Name of local authority removed for confidentiality] in July/August.

I hope to be helped in designing the questionnaires by a small group of looked-after young people who already are part of [Name of group removed for confidentiality]. I need your informed consent for ………………………………….to take part in this group, if you are happy for them to take part. I also need the written, informed consent of their carer(s) and would be grateful if you could read them this information sheet and ask if they consent to the young person being involved. If the young person is in contact with their birth parents, then I would also be grateful if you could do the same for them using the accompanying information/consent form, or confirm that the young person has no contact with their birth parents.

There will be three group sessions, each lasting approximately two hours (17:30 to 19:30) on the following dates: 26 June, 3 July and 17 July. I will record what is said in these sessions using a digital voice recorder. I will use this information, along with the results of the questionnaire to write my thesis. No names or identifying information will be mentioned in this thesis. No information will be kept once the project is over and the sound recordings will be deleted. During the project, recordings will be immediately transferred to a secure computer and physical materials will be kept in a locked drawer.

You or their birth parent(s) can withdraw your consent at any point. All data collected will be kept securely, confidentiall and anonymously. **Please sign overleaf if you give your consent.**

Thank you. For further information on this research please contact John Adrian-Vallance at

j.adrian-vallance@newcastle.ac.uk

or Lorna Wilson (Course Secretary) 0191 222 6568

John Adrian-Vallance C/o Louise Tilney
School of ECLS
King George VI Building
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU

Researching looked-after young people's views on school inclusion

Please return this consent form to …………….………………………………… by 26 June

I give consent for ……………….…………… to participate in a small group that will help us understand looked-after young people's views on what supports their inclusion in schools:

Social worker's signature . . . . Date:. . . . .

Carer' signature . . . . Date:. . . . .

Researching looked-after young people's views on school inclusion

Dear parent,

I am a postgraduate student from Newcastle University. I am researching the views of looked-after young people on what supports their inclusion in schools. I will be sending questionnaires on this subject to looked-after young people in [Name of local authority removed for confidentiality] in July/August.

I hope to be helped in designing the questionnaires by a small group of looked-after young people who already are part of [Name of group removed for confidentiality]. I need your informed consent for …………………………………….to take part in this group, if you are happy for them to take part.

There will be three group sessions, each lasting approximately two hours (17:30 to 19:30) on the following dates: 26 June, 3 July and 17 July. I will record what is said in these sessions using a digital voice recorder. I will use this information, along with the results of the questionnaire to write my thesis. No names or identifying information will be mentioned in this thesis. No information will be kept once the project is over and the sound recordings will be deleted. During the project, recordings will be immediately transferred to a secure computer and physical materials will be kept in a locked drawer.

You can withdraw your consent at any point. All data collected will be kept securely, confidentially and anonymously. **Please sign overleaf if you give your consent.**

Thank you. For further information on this research please contact John Adrian-Vallance at

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King George VI Building
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU

Researching looked-after young people's views on school inclusion

Please return this consent form to ……………….………………………………… by 26 June

I give consent for ……………………………. to participate in a small group that will help us understand looked-after young people's views on what supports their inclusion in schools:

Birth parent's signature . . . . Date:. . . . .

Appendix C : Details of focus group procedures

This appendix provides further detail on and rationale for what happened in the three focus group sessions. The aims of the first session were to get to know one-another, introduce the research and to explore and develop the model. The aim of the second session was to use the model as a framework to explore what could practically be done differently in schools. The aim of the final session was to develop a questionnaire in partnership with the young people.

MATERIALS

A mind map was used to explore the participants' understandings of inclusion.

In order to explore and develop the model, each of the model's six themes was written on a laminated A4 sheet of paper, while all the constituent concepts were presented on laminated strips of paper.

To explore what could be done differently in schools, a scaling technique was used. This involved a 0-10 scale on A1 paper.

A digital audio-recorder, flipchart paper, paper-and-pen notes and a camera were used to record data from the groups.

SESSION ONE

A brief icebreaker activity was used. The participants were then invited to suggest rules for the group and, if accepted by all members, these were written up on flipchart paper and displayed on the wall. These rules were returned to at the start of following sessions.

The group was reminded of the focus of the research and an itinerary was given for the first session. The group was invited to talk about how they felt about the research, asked if they had any questions, if they understood, and if they had any ideas for what direction they might like the research to take in sessions two and three.

They were then presented with an A1 sheet of paper with the word "Inclusion" written in a cloud in the centre. They each chose a marker pen and were invited to discuss what inclusion meant to them, and add to the mind map (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009).

The A4 cards with the 6 themes on were then placed on the table and used in a pile sorting activity (Colucci, 2007). The strips of paper with the theme's constituent

concepts were distributed amongst participants. These constituent concepts had been rephrased to make more sense to the participants. For example, "selective disclosure" became "getting to choose who knows what about you". Participants were asked to take it in turns to read aloud what was written on a strip of paper and discuss which theme they felt it belonged in, then place the strip on a theme card or between cards if no consensus could be reached. This prevented results being dominated by a vocal minority or being biased towards a majority consensus.

Participants were then asked to rank the top four constituent concepts for each theme based on which were the most important for achieving this theme (Colucci, 2007). For the theme of 'inclusion', the mind-map was returned to, and the same process was used to develop the four most important constituent concepts linked to inclusion.

SESSION TWO

Participants were reminded of the focus of research, what had happened last time and the ground rules. They were invited to add to or change any rules they wished. For the majority of this session, a technique adapted from Person Centred Planning (PCP) was used (Moran, 2001, 2006) to explore participants' experiences of the six themes in schools they had attended. The process generated rich data. This data was to be analysed if the questionnaire produced too few respondents. Since this was not the case, it is not within the scope of this thesis to further describe this aspect of the research of analyse the results here. Nonetheless, it is important to be aware of, since the first session had participants largely thinking about the themes in a somewhat abstract way, whereas this session grounded the ideas in their lived experiences.

SESSION THREE

The questionnaire was developed in session three. This primarily involved the writing of the individual items, although there was also some discussion about the structure and layout, introductory paragraphs, who should be asked to participate and what open-ended and other questions would be interesting to ask.

The writing of the individual items was done in pairs. In session one, participants had ranked the top four most important concepts for each theme. In pairs, these concepts were turned into questions that would measure each theme. It was explained that each questions should generate a range of responses one the Likert scale used and that half for each theme should be reversed (Oppenheim, 1992).

Appendix D : CHANGES TO THE PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE

Changes were made to individual items where responses were skewed or where the wording was confusing. This was based on the responses to the pilot questionnaire in which respondents had answered at least some of the Likert-scale questions. This included 28 respondents. The lowest number of respondents for an item was 22. The items that were changed are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Changes to items as a result of the pilot questionnaire

Original item	Reason for change	Final item
I had a special relationship with someone who was genuine, caring and trusting	Most respondents agreed	I had a very special relationship with someone who was genuine, caring and trusting
I felt included at school	Most respondents agreed	I felt very included at school
I didn't know many people who thought that education is important	Tense doesn't make sense*	I didn't know many people who thought that education was important
I had someone who listened to me and understood me without making me feel different	Most respondents agreed	I had someone who really listened to me and understood me without making me feel different
I had supportive relationships at school	Most respondents agreed	I had very supportive relationships at school
I felt involved in school	Most respondents agreed	I felt very involved in school
Changing placement or school was a common part of my life	Most respondents agreed	Changing placement or school was a very common part of my life
My teachers usually encouraged and involved me	Most respondents agreed	My teachers always encouraged and involved me
I felt lonely at school	Most respondents disagreed	I sometimes felt lonely at school
I went to school most days	Most respondents agreed	I went to school every day
I didn't have anyone who had formed a close bond with me	Confusing	Nobody at school formed a close bond with me
I had someone who accepted me for who I was	Most respondents agreed, confusing	At school I was accepted for who I was
I felt accepted at school	Most respondents agreed	I felt very accepted at school
I didn't participate at school	Most respondents disagreed	I sometimes didn't participate at school

Note: The examples given are from the questionnaire for school leavers, but the corresponding items where changed on the other version as well. *This is the only change that was made only to the version for school leavers and not to the version for those still at school.

All those who completed the paper questionnaire answered every question. Several of those who completed the online version gave up before answering all the Likert-scale items. It was hypothesised that this was because these items were spread over three consecutive pages which could not be seen in advance in the online version.

Respondents may have given up not knowing how many more pages they were required to complete. In the online version a line was therefore added to the top of each of these pages, telling respondents whether they were one the first, second or last of three pages of this type of questions. A "progress bar" was also removed as it was unrepresentative of a respondent's progress though the questionnaire. This was because those who responded differently to the question about whether they were still at school or not saw a different set of questions. The progress bar measured all pages, although each participant jumped many pages that were irrelevant to them.

The pilot questionnaire had an open-ended question "how could we improve this survey?" This was removed.

Appendix E : FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THOSE STILL AT SCHOOL

What is inclusion? It means feeling that you are a part of a group. It means taking part and not feeling left out. It means that people like you for who you are.

We are a group of young people who have been in care, and one student from Newcastle University. We want to know your views on how you felt when you were at school. This will help us to find out how to help people in care feel more included in schools. The results will be written up in a report. The report will be shown to schools. This will help schools to improve the way they support looked after children.

You have been asked for your views because you know what it is like to be in care and to be at school.

It will only take 5-10 minutes.

Your answers will only be used together with everyone else's answers. Nobody will ever look at your answers on their own. You are free to stop answering questions and leave this page at any time.

Please do not provide any personal information or names in any of the comment boxes.

To complete this survey you must be at least 16 years old.

For further information on this research please contact John Adrian-Vallance at:

John Adrian-Vallance C/o Lorna Wilson
School of ECLS
King George VI Building
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU

The following questions are about you and your time in care. If you're not sure about the answer to a question, it is ok to guess or leave blank.

1. How old are you in years?

……………………...........

1. Are you male or female? Please circle one.

Female   Male

2. Are you in care or have you left care? Please circle one.

I am in care   I have left care   I have never been in care

3. How old were you when you first went into care?

……………………...........

4. How old were you when you left care?

……………………...........

5. Are you still at school or have you left school? Please circle one.

I am still at school   I have left school

6. How many times have you changed placement (where you live)?

……………………...........

7. How many times have you changed school?

……………………...........

8. Where have you spent most of your time at school? Please circle one.

England   Scotland   Wales   Northern Ireland

Other (please specify) ……………………...........

On the following pages there are sentences about your time at school. Please tick the boxes to show how true these are for you.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Not sure	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have a very special relationship with someone who is genuine, caring and trusting							
I feel very included at school							
I don't have the same teachers for long							
My privacy is respected							
People at school understand what being looked after means							
I don't know many people who think that education is important							
I have someone who really listens to me and understands me without making me feel different							
I have very supportive relationships at school							
I am treated as a label and not an individual at school							
I feel very involved in school							
At school I have someone who has stuck with me							
Changing placement or school is a very common part of my life							
My teachers always encourage and involve me							
I am often around people who are interested in and enthusiastic about education							

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Not sure	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Most people at school understand the difficulties someone like me might have faced							
I am not often asked for my opinion about decisions that affect my life							
I have relationships with people chosen by me							
I don't have many friends who understand me							
People at school make me feel different							
I sometimes feel lonely at school							
At school I usually work with the same members of staff							
I go to school every day							
My successes in school are often unnoticed							
I have uncertainties and worries about school							
My teachers don't have training on what it means to be looked after							
Nobody at school has formed a close bond with me							
I feel like an individual at school							
At school I am accepted for who I am							
I feel very accepted at school							
I sometimes don't participate at school							

What could your school do to make you feel more included?

Do you know who your designated teacher is? Please circle one.

Yes   No

What could your designated teacher do to make you feel more included?

How could we improve this survey?

Thank you for helping with our research!

Appendix F : FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS

What is inclusion? It means feeling that you are a part of a group. It means taking part and not feeling left out. It means that people like you for who you are.

We are a group of young people who have been in care, and one student from Newcastle University. We want to know your views on how you felt when you were at school. This will help us to find out how to help people in care feel more included in schools. The results will be written up in a report. The report will be shown to schools. This will help schools to improve the way they support looked after children.

You have been asked for your views because you know what it is like to be in care and to be at school.

It will only take 5-10 minutes.

Your answers will only be used together with everyone else's answers. Nobody will ever look at your answers on their own. You are free to stop answering questions at any time.

Please do <u>not</u> provide your name anywhere.

To complete this survey you must be at least 16 years old.

For further information on this research please contact John Adrian-Vallance at:

John Adrian-Vallance C/o Lorna Wilson
School of ECLS
King George VI Building
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU

The following questions are about you and your time in care. If you're not sure about the answer to a question, it is ok to guess or leave blank.

2. How old are you in years?

………………….............

9. Are you male or female? Please circle one.

Female   Male

10. Are you in care or have you left care? Please circle one.

I am in care   I have left care   I have never been in care

11. How old were you when you first went into care?

………………….............

12. How old were you when you left care?

………………….............

13. Are you still at school or have you left school? Please circle one.

I am still at school   I have left school

14. How many times did you change placement (where you lived) while you were at school?

………………….............

15. How many times did you change school?

………………….............

16. Where did you spend most of your time at school? Please circle one.

England   Scotland   Wales   Northern Ireland

Other (please specify) ………………….............

On the following pages there are sentences about your time at school. Please tick the boxes to show how true these are for you.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Not sure	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I had a very special relationship with someone who was genuine, caring and trusting							
I felt very included at school							
I didn't usually have the same teachers for long							
My privacy was respected							
People at school understood what being in care meant							
I didn't know many people who thought that education was important							
I had someone who really listened to me and understood me without making me feel different							
I had very supportive relationships at school							
I was treated as a label and not an individual at school							
I felt very involved in school							
At school I had someone who stuck with me							
Changing placement or school was a very common part of my life							
My teachers always encouraged and involved me							
I was often around people who were interested in and enthusiastic about education							

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Not sure	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Most people at school understood the difficulties someone like me might have faced							
I wasn't often asked for my opinion about decisions that affected my life							
I had relationships with people chosen by me							
I didn't have many friends who understood me							
People at school made me feel different							
I felt very lonely at school							
At school I usually worked with the same members of staff							
I went to school every day							
My successes in school were often unnoticed							
I had uncertainties and worries about school							
My teachers didn't have training on what it meant to be in care							
Nobody at school formed a close bond with me							
I felt like an individual at school							
At school I was accepted for who I was							
I felt very accepted at school							
I sometimes didn't participate at school							

What could your school(s) have done to make you feel more included?

How could we improve this survey?

Thank you for helping with our research!

Appendix G : ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE PAGES SEEN BY THOSE STILL AT
SCHOOL

SurveyMonkey - Question Builder   [SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Your Views...   +

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Newcastle University

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

What is inclusion? It means feeling that you are a part of a group. It means taking part and not feeling left out. It means that people like you for who you are.

We are a group of young people who have been in care, and one student from Newcastle University. We want to know your views on how you felt when you were at school. This will help us to find out how to help people in care feel more included in schools. The results will be written up in a report. The report will be shown to schools. This will help schools to improve the way they support looked after children.

You have been asked for your views because you know what it is like to be in care and to be at school.

It will only take 5-10 minutes.

Your answers will only be used together with everyone else's answers. Nobody will ever look at your answers on their own. You are free to stop answering questions and leave this page at any time.

Please do not provide any personal information or names in any of the comment boxes.

To complete this survey you must be at least 16 years old.

How old are you?

[dropdown]

Are you male or female?

○ Male   ○ Female

Are you in care or have you left care?

○ I am in care now   ○ I have left care   ○ I have never been in care

Next page

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SurveyMonkey - Question Builder   ×   [SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Your Views... ×   +

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

The questions on this page and the next page are about you and your time in care. If you're not sure about the answer to a question, it is ok to guess or leave blank.

How old were you when you first went into care?

⌄

How old were you when you left care?

⌄

Are you still at school or have you left school?

◯ I am still at school   ◯ I have left school

Go back   Next page

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

How many times have you changed placement (where you live)?

How many times have you changed school?

Where have you spent most of your time at school?

- ○ England
- ○ Scotland
- ○ Wales
- ○ Northern Ireland
- ○ Other (please specify)

Go back   Next page

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SurveyMonkey - Question Builder ×   [SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Your Views... ×   +

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

On the next three pages are sentences about your time at school. Please tick the boxes to show how true these are for you. This is the first page of questions like these (1/3).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have very supportive relationships at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel very included at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People at school understand what being looked after means	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel very involved in school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't know many people who think that education is important	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am treated as a label and not an individual at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have a very special relationship with someone who is genuine, caring and trusting	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't have the same teachers for long	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My privacy is respected	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have someone who really listens to me and understands me without making me feel different	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Go back   Next page

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

Please Continue. This is the second of three pages of questions like these (2/3).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
My relationships at school have been chosen by me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My teachers always encourage and involve me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am often around people who are interested in and enthusiastic about education	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I somtimes feel lonely at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Changing placement or school is a very common part of my life	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Most people at school understand the difficulties someone like me might have faced	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't have many friends who understand me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am not often asked for my opinion about decisions that affect my life	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People at school make me feel different	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
At school I have someone who has stuck with me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Go back   Next page

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100

Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

Nearly finished! This is the last page of questions like these (3/3).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel like an individual at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel very accepted at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
At school I am accepted for who I am	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My teachers don't have training on what it means to be looked after	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
At school I usually work with the same members of staff	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Nobody at school has formed a close bond with me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I go to school every day	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I sometimes don't participate at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have uncertainties and worries about school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My successes in school are often unnoticed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Go back   Next page

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

These are the last questions

What could your school do to make you feel more included?

Do you know who your designated teacher is?

◯ Yes   ◯ No

What could your designated teacher do to make you feel more included?

Go back   Next page

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

You're finished! Thank you for helping with our research!

For further information on this research please contact John Adrian-Vallance at:

John Adrian-Vallance C/o Lorna Wilson
School of ECLS
King George VI Building
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU

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Appendix H : ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE PAGES SEEN BY SCHOOL LEAVERS

SurveyMonkey Survey Summary - Yo... ✕   [SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Your Views... ✕   +

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

What is inclusion? It means feeling that you are a part of a group. It means taking part and not feeling left out. It means that people like you for who you are.

We are a group of young people who have been in care, and one student from Newcastle University. We want to know your views on how you felt when you were at school. This will help us to find out how to help people in care feel more included in schools. The results will be written up in a report. The report will be shown to schools. This will help schools to improve the way they support looked after children.

You have been asked for your views because you know what it is like to be in care and to be at school.

It will only take 5-10 minutes.

Your answers will only be used together with everyone else's answers. Nobody will ever look at your answers on their own. You are free to stop answering questions and leave this page at any time.

Please do not provide any personal information or names in any of the comment boxes.

To complete this survey you must be at least 16 years old.

How old are you?

[▼]

Are you male or female?

○ Male   ○ Female

Are you in care or have you left care?

○ I am in care now   ○ I have left care   ○ I have never been in care

[Next page]

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SurveyMonkey Survey Summary - Yo... ✕   [SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Your Views... ✕   +

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Newcastle University

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

The questions on this page and the next page are about you and your time in care. If you're not sure about the answer to a question, it is ok to guess or leave blank.

How old were you when you first went into care?

⌄

How old were you when you left care?

⌄

Are you still at school or have you left school?

◯ I am still at school   ◯ I have left school

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

How many times did you change placement (where you lived) while you were at school?

How many times did you change school?

Where did you spent most of your time at school?

- England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Other (please specify)

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

On the next three pages are sentences about your time at school. Please tick the boxes to show how true these are for you. This is the first page of questions like these (1/3).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I didn't know many people who thought that education was important	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I didn't usually have the same teachers for long	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I had a very special relationship with someone who was genuine, caring and trusting	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
At school I was accepted for who I was	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I felt very involved in school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I felt very included at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I was treated as a label and not an individual at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People at school understood what being in care meant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I had very supportive relationships at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I had someone who really listened to me and understood me without making me feel different	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

Please Continue. This is the second of three pages of questions like these (2/3).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Most people at school understood the difficulties someone like me might have faced	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I sometimes felt lonely at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I was often around people who were interested in and enthusiastic about education	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Changing placement or school was a very common part of my life	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My teachers always encouraged and involved me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My relationships at school were chosen by me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I wasn't often asked for my opinion about decisions that affected my life	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
At school I had someone who stuck with me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I didn't have many friends who understood me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People at school made me feel different	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

Nearly finished! This is the last page of questions like these (3/3).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I had uncertainties and worries about school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I felt like an individual at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My successes in school were often unnoticed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I went to school every day	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My teachers didn't have training on what it meant to be in care	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I sometimes didn't participate at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
At school I usually worked with the same members of staff	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I felt very accepted at school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My privacy was respected	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Nobody at school formed a close bond with me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

This is the last question

What could your school(s) have done to make you feel more included?

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Your Views on The Inclusion of Looked After Children in Schools

You're finished! Thank you for helping with our research!

For further information on this research please contact John Adrian-Vallance at:

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