The Emotional Wellbeing of Black and Dual Heritage

Looked After Young People

Sinclair Coward

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how the experience of being looked after impacts on the emotional wellbeing of black and dual heritage young people. Looked after children and young people have been identified as a specific group whose views need to contribute to the development of policy (DfES, 2007). However, studies gaining the views of black and dual heritage looked after young people are limited, thus their needs remain under researched and largely unknown.

Guided by the philosophical assumptions and methodological approach of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis a semi-structured face-to-face interview was conducted with ten (n-10) care experienced black and dual heritage young people. Five (n-5) black and dual heritage social workers who were experienced in working with this demographic were also interviewed. Three superordinate themes were identified from the interpretive analysis: 1) Emotional Unavailability, 2) Ethnicity, and 3) Surviving School. A number of subordinate themes were also identified under each theme.

The findings suggest that black and dual heritage looked after young people have additional and different needs from the general looked after population. The young people emphasised a lack of authentically warm relationships with their foster carers and to a lesser extent with their social workers. The findings raise challenging issues for teachers who were experienced by the young people as being insensitive and judgmental. An underpinning concern was the lack of recognition from foster carers of their identities as black and dual heritage young people.

In attempting to move towards service improvement the data analysis lead to a number of recommendations for key professionals, local authorities and future research. Underpinning these recommendations is an emphasis on the importance of listening to the voices of this vulnerable group.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1: Introduction

The aim of this introduction is to outline the context for this study and to explain the rationale behind it. It will reflect on why the investigation is important. This will be followed by an indication of the aims and objectives of the study followed by an outline of each chapter.

Looked After Children (LAC) have been identified as being the most vulnerable group of children and young people in our society (Cameron and Maginn, 2011), but despite having a proportional overrepresentation in numbers in the looked after population (DfCSF, 2007) evidence on the impact of ethnicity on mental health and emotional wellbeing is inconclusive (TCRI, 2007, Dogra, et al 2012). The aim of this research was to explore, using first person accounts, how the experience of being looked after impacts on the emotional wellbeing of black and dual heritage looked after young people.

1.2: Rationale for the study

As at March 31st 2014 there were 68,840 looked after children aged 18 years or younger in public care in England (DfE 2014). More than half (58%) of these children and young people were looked after under a care order (interim or full) and 28% were looked after under a voluntary agreement (19,230) (Ibid). The main reason for children and young people entering care is as a result of abuse, neglect or family

breakdown (SEU, 2003 p3). Most looked after children are placed in foster care (75%), some are placed in residential children homes or secure units and hostels (9%), a smaller number are placed at home (5%), with similar numbers placed for adoption (5%), (DfE, 2014).

The majority of looked after children are from a white British background (78%), this is the same proportion as they represent in the general population (ONS, 2011 Census). Excluding unaccompanied asylum seekers, mixed groups and Black/Black British groups account for 8% and 6% of the looked after population respectively, which is a severe overrepresentation of their numbers in the general population (3% for each) (DfCSF 2007). Clough (et al 2006) observed that despite the relatively high proportion of the care population from a minority ethnic background, there was 'a poor understanding of the needs of these service users by staff' (p78).' This lack of attention to the particular needs of Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BME) finds support from The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE, 2008 in Community Care, 2008) when it notes that foster children from ethnic minority groups have particular emotional and behavioural needs which are in addition to those of other children. It recommends that these children be placed in an environment where they can develop an understanding of their own culture and where they can receive support in dealing with racism and discrimination. The SCIE also recommends that black and dual heritage children need to make sense of their history and will need extra help with this if placed with white carers (p.22).

Ibidum (2000) goes further and accuses the care system of being racist (with some justification see Richards, and Ince, 2000). She describes the monitoring of services for black and ethnic minority children as 'terrible' (p.18) and argues that, in order to provide decent services for black children, service providers must first establish their specific needs. Critical to establishing these needs is the production of reliable evidence of the social, physical, intellectual and psychological needs of black and dual heritage children.

In a similar vein, Boushel (2000) observes how social welfare research is dominated by studies of white majority-culture samples undertaken primarily by white researchers. The argument is that this research is then used to describe the

experiences of minority ethnic groups and serves to justify social policy initiatives that have implications for those groups. She concludes: '*social welfare research is failing adequately to reflect the multi-racial and multi-cultural nature of society*' (p.71). This view finds support from Ince (1998) and Ahmad (1992) who both warn that the lack of research evaluating the impact of being looked-after on black children is leading to unmet needs.

In addition to not having their needs met appropriately, black and dual heritage looked after children and young people may be further disadvantaged by a lack of awareness and appropriate system responses to their increased vulnerability. The Care Matters White paper (DfCFS, 2007) confirms a lack of awareness on this issue when it notes that existing research has failed to consider whether different looked after groups experience health issues differentially (Ch.5, p.21). On the issue of mental health the white paper says: '*it would not be unreasonable to expect a disparity between the white and ethnic minority cohorts*' (p24). Yet, a short while later, a different Government removed the requirement to consider race when seeking adoptive parents through the Children and Families Act 2014. This was despite evidence from the Government's own inspectors that social workers were acting appropriately in their assessments and that a search for a 'perfect' match was not causing undue delay in placing BME young people. Instead, workers were reported to be giving careful consideration to how the ethnic and cultural needs of the children could be met (Ofsted, 2012).

The Care Matters programme (DfES, 2007) identifies looked after children and young people as a specific group whose views need to contribute to the development of policy. But despite this declaration, in relation to black and dual heritage looked after young people, this aim is yet to be realised. Few studies have focused on black and dual heritage looked after young people, and those 'giving voice' to this group are even rarer. The National Children's Bureau report entitled *'Listening to Children in Care: A Review of Methodological and Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Looked after Children's Perspectives' (Holland 2009)* explored forty-four journal articles published between 2003 and 2008 that reported on the methodological approaches used to listen to the experiences and perspectives of children living in

care. An analysis of those papers selected reveal that few contain any reference to race and ethnicity.

1.3: Philosophical Framework

The philosophical framework underpinning this research study was shaped by the theoretical assumptions of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Following a process of critical appraisal, IPA was seen to be the most suitable approach to understand the experiences of black and dual heritage looked after young people. It was chosen over potential alternatives because of a belief that the most effective way to ascertain the unique needs of the population studied is to elicit their experiences and views direct from them. According to Smith (2003) the aim of IPA is to explore the details of how respondents consciously make sense of their experiences and the meaning these hold for them. As this approach is dynamic and involves the researcher in a 'double hermeneutic,' it is necessary to state my motivations in researching this topic. I acknowledge my active role in the research process and declare my position in order to support the need for transparency. I currently work as social work academic, and my previous practice experience involved many years working as a social worker and a residential social worker. As a black male working in this area, I have been particularly interested in supporting black and dual heritage looked after young people. I take a keen interest in any support mechanisms available to help black disadvantaged children and young people and continuously reflect on my practice with regard to my role in this. During my practice I have been particularly struck by the poor outcomes for black and dual heritage looked after young people. I believe that through this research I can raise awareness and understanding surrounding this vulnerable group, which will hopefully influence practice and therefore the outcomes for black and dual heritage Looked After Children.

1.4: Aims and Research Questions

In order to develop an understanding of the experiences of black and dual heritage looked after young people the study was designed to address the following questions:

- *How does the experience of being looked after impact on the emotional wellbeing of black and dual heritage looked after young people?*
- *How do practice frameworks, and professional interventions impact on the emotional well–being of this population?*

Guided by the subjectivist ontological paradigms intrinsic to interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009), this study seeks to represent, interrogate, interpret and ultimately make meaning of the experience of living in public care by focusing on the voices of black and dual heritage looked after young people. In doing so, it is hoped that through the interpretations of the young peoples and social workers' words, the particular needs of black and dual heritage looked after young people will be highlighted indicating how best foster carers and social workers can use existing or potential structures and frameworks to deliver quality services.

1.5: Defining Terms

1.5.1: *Looked After Children and Young People*

Young people who cannot be looked after at home and are in the care of the local authority are described under the Children Act (1989) as being 'looked after'. A looked-after child is a child who has been:

- Placed in the care of the local authority by a court order (Section 31)

- Given accommodation by the local authority social services department for more than 24 hours (Section 20)

The term 'Looked After' also includes unaccompanied asylum seeking children; children placed with friends and family, children who are compulsorily accommodated through being remanded or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (Section 21). The term excludes children who have been permanently adopted or who are on a special guardianship order.

The terms 'Looked After Children', 'Children Looked After', and 'Children in Care' are often used interchangeably to describe children and young people who are in the care of a Local Authority. This study is concerned only with young people who have been looked after under Sections 20 and 31 of the Children Act (1989), which also entitles them to after care services into adulthood. The term 'Looked After Children' (LAC) will be used on the understanding that this does not imply homogeneity of this group. That being said, many of the findings in this study may also be relevant to other vulnerable groups of LAC and young people.

1.5.2: Black

The term 'Black' originated in the anti-racist movements in the UK and USA in the 1960s where previously it was used pejoratively, the reclamation positioned it as a source of pride and identity. At one stage the term encompassed Asian people in recognition of the perceived shared commonalities of oppression, and to foster a sense of solidarity in the fight against racial injustice. But as Dominelli (1997, in Robinson, 2007) points out, some Asian groups rejected the label in favour of their own identity (p4). In this study, where the term black is used, it refers to people of African and Caribbean descent.

1.5.3: Dual Heritage

The term dual heritage refers to children and young people with one parent who is black African or black Caribbean and one parent who is white. This will be the preferred term used throughout this study. Other terms exist to describe these young people, such as mixed heritage, multiple heritage, multiracial, mixed ethnicity and mixed race and there are other combinations of 'races' (for example Asian/white) and the findings of this study may also hold implications for these groups. The term dual heritage is also preferred due to the young people involved in this study having agreed to the use of the term.

1.5.4: Emotional Well-Being

There is a great deal of ambiguity with no universally agreed definition of the term 'well-being' (Dodge et al 2012). Indeed 'emotional well-being', 'quality of life' and 'mental health' are used interchangeably by different professions and disciplines (TCRI, 2007) which has 'given rise to blurred and overly broad definitions' of the term (Forgeard, et al 2011, p. 81). Professionals from a more clinical diagnosis-treatment background (psychology, psychiatry) appear to favour the term 'mental health', while Stratham and Chase (2010) note that use of the term allows psychologists to 'de-medicalise' the concept of health (p.5). Implicit in these differing usages are philosophical and theoretical ideas as to where the problems lie and where and how interventions should be focused (Cox, 2004).

One definition has emotional well-being as the absence of criteria most commonly associated with being ill, be it physiological (e.g. Bookwala et al, 2003) or in contrast psychological (Boey and Chiu, 1998). The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Adi et al, 2007, p9) is more specific and divides the term into three categories: emotional (happiness and confidence), psychological (resilience, confidence, and the capacity to manage conflict and problem solve,) and social wellbeing (good relationships with others and the opposite of conduct disorder,

delinquency, interpersonal violence and bullying). This definition will be adopted by this study due to its universal applicability, and because the term 'emotional wellbeing' is more acceptable to young people than the term 'mental health', primarily for its non-stigmatising connotation (Swales, 2005).

Other definitions of emotional wellbeing that were considered included, for example, Keyes (2002) who using the same categories as NICE, asked young people to report the frequency of symptoms of their emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. He then diagnosed individuals as 'flourishing˙ if they achieved a certain number of positive symptoms from each domain. Dodge et al (2012) built on Keyes' work to present a new definition of wellbeing, which is when individuals have '*the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge*' (p230).

The strength of this definition lies in its simplicity as it can be applied regardless of age, culture and gender, and reflects the current emphasis on 'positive psychology' in its optimism. Bazalgette et al (2015) reporting the voice of young people saw them define well-being as 'happy' 'joyful' and excited' (p17). One care leaver in the study described emotional well-being as 'having a secure, warm, comfortable place where you can go and relax'. Poor emotional well-being by contrast, was described as being 'sad' 'depressed' 'unloved' 'taking it out on other people' and 'doing criminal damage' (ibid, p17).

For clarification, in this study I draw no distinction between the 'psychological' and the 'emotional'. One is of 'the mind' and the other relates to 'feelings' but as thoughts and feelings are intrinsically linked to how we process our experiences it seems futile to try to separate them conceptually.

1.6: The Care System

The Children Act 1989 (Department of Health, 1989) provides the legal framework for the modern child care system in England and Wales. The Act lays emphasis on the principle that children are best cared for within their own family. It also makes provisions for those instances where it is unsafe for the children to stay within their family. Such children and young people will be looked after by the local authority, which assumes the role of 'corporate parent'. The concept of 'corporate parenting' was introduced by the 1998 Quality Protects initiative, which aimed to transform the management and delivery of children's social services. Corporate parenting signifies that the local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that good parents should provide for their own children.

However, the experiences and outcomes for LAC have remained poor for many decades as confirmed by the Government (HC 924, 2011). In an effort to address these shortcomings, the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children Act 2004 were introduced to raise the quality of corporate parenting for LAC. Despite these efforts, evidence continues to show that substitute care is below standard (Barn and Montovani 2006). Thus nearly two decades after *Quality Protects* (DOH, 1998) and a raft of legislation and guidance, the outlook for significant change is bleak. A recent Public Accounts Committee hearing declared: '*The Department for Education has ultimate responsibility for overseeing services for children in care. It has demonstrated an alarming reluctance to play an active role in improving services and securing a better future for this most vulnerable group of children.*' It concluded: '*If the Department is serious about its objectives to improve the quality of care then a step change is required in the Department's attitude and leadership.*' (HC 809, 2015).

1.7: Structure of the study

This study is divided into six chapters. This first chapter provides a brief outline of the academic rationale for the study and its primary aims and objectives. Chapter 2 gives context to the study through presenting a review of the extant literature. Chapter 3 presents a discussion on the research strategy used to guide and inform the study. It begins by outlining the epistemological position before moving on to consider the theoretical influences on the study and then describes the processes used in conducting the research. Taken together, the epistemological evaluation provided in the chapter validates the reasons why IPA was selected as the most suitable strategy to guide and inform this study. The issue of reflexivity is revisited and discussed and will reappear again in the concluding chapter given its centrality to the theoretical approach adopted. The chapter closes by providing a detailed explanation of the process of analysis, showing how the study moved from interview transcripts to a position of analytical interpretation.

Following the discussion on the research strategy, Chapter 4 provides details of the way in which black and dual heritage looked after young people make sense of their experience of living in public care. It does this through using illustrative quotes from respondents to enhance validity and support interpretation and will be presented without reference to the literature. Chapter 4 reports the major and subordinate themes identified during the analysis. Chapter 5 provides a discussion on the findings, and where appropriate compares and contrasts these to the extant literature. This Chapter discusses the three major themes identified: Emotional unavailability, ethnicity and surviving schooling. These themes are further subdivided into seven subthemes: nine-to fivers; emotions; social worker qualities, feeling isolated; identity, behaviour and exclusions, and stigma and labelling.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. It will reflect on the findings and consider how the testimonies presented could, and should be used to inform the way in which social work policy and practice could incorporate the needs of black and dual heritage looked after young people.

1.8: Summary

This chapter has indicated that the Care Matters agenda (DfES, 2007) calls for increased social work support to empower people who have lived in care as children to describe their experiences and make recommendations on how it might be improved. However, a preliminary overview of literature demonstrated that black and dual heritage looked after young people are considered to be marginalised by both social policy and practice. Reflecting on this disparity, this chapter has also introduced the overall aims and objectives of the study and presented an overview of the study by summarising the content of each chapter. The following chapter will present the strategy used to conduct the systematic enquiry. An extended discussion will then follow to reflect upon the themes that this review revealed in order to show why the experiences of black and dual heritage looked after young people were in need of further systematic investigation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: Introduction to Chapter

The purpose of this study was to understand how the experience of being looked after impacts on the emotional well-being of black and dual-heritage young people, and how social work practice frameworks and professional interventions contribute to these experiences. The data may generate evidence that a) Contributes to the levels of knowledge and understanding on the emotional well-being of the target group, b) Contributes to policy development as it effects this group c) Builds on existing understandings of the needs of this demographic d) Contributes to the development of a new practice framework for agencies and social workers working in this area.

The review reflects a number of underlying assumptions: first it takes a critical view of taken for granted assumptions about the social world and believes our view of reality is shaped by social interaction within a cultural context that has meaning to us. Second, it presumes that the values of the researcher are always present and that a neutral position is impossible to attain. Third, the assumption is made that there are unequal power relationships in society and that racist structures and practices need to be challenged.

The review is divided into two sections. Section 1 critically reviews the key research in relation to the emotional wellbeing of looked-after young people with a particular focus on black and dual-heritage young people. It provides the conceptual framework for the study and presents relevant theoretical and methodologically significant evidence. Section 2 critically examines the literature on practice frameworks and professional responses and interventions when working with looked-after young people.

SECTION 1

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING OF BLACK AND DUAL HERITAGE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

2.2: Introduction

This section explores the emotional well-being of black and dual-heritage looked – after young people through a critical review of the extant literature. It will provide the conceptual framework for the study and present relevant theoretical and methodological evidence.

2.3: Emotional Well-Being and Looked after Children and Young People

Within the context of a failing care system it is necessary to note that it was not until 1999 that the first large-scale national survey on children's mental health was conducted (ONS, 2000). This study recorded almost one in ten children aged between 5 and 15 suffered from some form of mental health problem. The first survey of the mental health of looked-after children followed shortly after. This was prompted by the Utting (1997) report, which found evidence that up to 75% of looked-after children had mental health problems and recommended this become a priority area for Government. The national survey was conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2003) and examined children looked-after in England in 2002. Data was collected from over 1000 children from different placement types: residential care (18%), foster care (67%), living with their natural parents (on care orders) (11%), and living independently (4%). The study found that two thirds of children living in residential care, two fifths of those in foster care or living with their natural parents, and one half of those living independently suffered some form of mental health

problem. The researchers were able to conclude that for 5-10 year-old looked-after children their overall rates of mental illness was five times that of children in the general population (42% v 8%). For 11-15 year-olds the prevalence rate was slightly more (49% v 11%). The survey reported data on just over one thousand looked-after children of whom 63 were black. On this point the survey found 'some differences' between the racial groups but concluded that these were not statistically significant. Readers were cautioned not to draw firm conclusions from the data as sampling errors based on the relative proportions could render apparently large differences statistically insignificant.

The ONS survey (ibid) can be seen as the continuation of a perceived trend by researchers to marginalise or otherwise overlook opportunities to develop findings and suggest practice and policy recommendations useful to black and dual heritage LAC. For example, data from that study pertaining to 63 black LAC on their mental health could have provided valuable information as to the mental health of this sub-group in their own right without comparison to larger white samples. At the time of the study in 2002 black and dual heritage children and young people were overrepresented in the looked after population. This was known at the time as statistics on the ethnicity of looked after children had begun to be collected by Government in 2000.

Consistent with that 2003 ONS survey, previous research into the mental health of looked-after children and young people omitted any measures for ethnicity. In their review of the literature on the Mental Health of Looked After Children Richardson and Joughin (2000) said: '*We have… been unable to identify any significant research that specifically addresses the mental health needs of children from minority ethnic groups. What is clear is the need for more research into the needs, met and unmet, of these children (p32'*). Similarly, the Mental Health Foundation in its publication 'The Mental Health of Looked-After Children' (MHF, 2002) recommended more research was needed on this vulnerable group but especially '*on the specific needs and problems of children from minority ethnic groups and different faith groups'* (p.5).

More recently, Bazalgette et al (2015) interviewed forty-two looked after young people and worked closely with four local authorities and a number of professional

groups, in seeking to answer the question of 'how the looked after system can achieve good emotional wellbeing for children in care?' An additional question the study sought to answer was 'what would a care system that prioritises looked after young peoples' emotional wellbeing look like?' The study produced five priorities for change: 1) embed an emphasis on emotional wellbeing throughout the LAC system; 2) take a proactive and preventative approach; 3) give children and young people voice and influence, 4) support children's relationships and, 5) support care leavers' emotional needs (p5). These findings are salient to the current study in its prioritisation of emotional well-being, promotion of long term relationships, and in its call for proactive action to expedite change. It is regrettable that the methodology failed to give detailed information on the characteristics of the young people who participated in the study beyond their gender. Of note however, was that the study illustrated case studies with pictures of black children, but as to whether any black children actually took part in the study must remain unknown.

Reflective Summary

It seems clear to me that the issue of mental health of looked after young people has attracted the attention of policy makers as evidenced by large quantitative prevalence studies establishing a base. It also seems clear that looked after young people are regarded as a whole with little attention being paid to identifiable groups within the whole. It would have been useful to have seen proportions taken into account in the research agenda supported by central funding aimed at addressing questions as to the disproportionate numbers of black and dual heritage young people in the system. It's pleasing to see that this gap has not gone unnoticed by researchers but to date there has been little motivation to tackle this on the parts of both individual researchers and Government funded research projects.

A number of assessment tools exist to screen young people for emotional and behavioural difficulties some of which have been validated for use with LAC. In

2008 the Government required that all local authorities in England return information to them on the emotional and behavioural health of children in their care. The data was to be collected through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 2001). This tool, to be completed by the main foster carer, claims to be internationally standardised and so applies to children between 4 and 16 of all racial backgrounds. The SDQ is used to assess whether a child has, or may develop, emotional or behavioural difficulties and requires carers to tick a box based on how far they agree with a set of statements that describes the young person. Carers completing this assessment therefore, have to know the young person well in order to return accurate data and crucially, they are not required to include the young person in completing the form. The scoring of the test involves totalling four categories: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity and peer problems. Depending on the score, this may indicate a referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), which can then provide assessment and treatment of mental health problems.

However, while the idea to screen for emotional problems is a positive one, the degree of instability in the system combined with the number of placement moves experienced by LAC mitigate against many foster carers knowing their foster child/ren in sufficient depth to accurately complete this questionnaire. Where carers feel they do not know their foster child well they are advised to pass the form back to the local authority to be completed by someone else. But with social worker instability also running high, this could prove equally problematic.

In addition, although evaluated to be effective in providing prevalence rates of need (Goodman, 2001), some researchers have found that while the SDQ gives an indication of a child's functioning, it fails to deliver in a number of areas. One such critique is that the SDQ fails to assess aspects of the environment that might impact on the looked after child's emotional wellbeing (Luke et al, 2014). Another drawback is that it is less effective in identifying internalising factors than children who externalise their distress (Tarren-Sweeney et al, 2004). In addition, the SDQ cannot, on its own, '*provide a retrospective view of the mental health needs of the LAC population. It is best used as a tool within a wider holistic assessment that encourages*

young people's participation in that process' (Richards et al, 2006 p50). Richards et al (Ibid) recommend expanding the qualitative component to the SDQ in order to gain the looked after child's understanding of the subjective rating of their carer. In their study, young people rated their own needs using the SDQ, and when compared to ratings given by foster carers, LAC ratings were 'consistently lower'. There is a version of the SDQ available on-line which young people aged 11-16 can complete, but the extent to which this is used, and the extent to which this then impacts on any subsequent clinical conversations is as yet unknown (Wolpert, 2014).

Where the SDQ indicates a referral to CAMHS this will often be made by the social worker but that service itself is not without problems. For example, fewer than half of LAC that needed support from CAMHS was able to access it (Mount, Lister and Bennun, 2004), and when accessed, the effectiveness of the service remains questionable (Rushton and Dance, 2006). A review of CAMHS (DfCSF, 2008) indicates that BME groups are under-represented as service users and are more likely to be identified for services at the point of crisis. The review (Ibid) also identified LAC as having needs in a number of different areas and as being at risk of falling between the services. It identified BME children as a vulnerable group due to not having their problems identified and addressed and attributes this to discrimination, and/or a lack of awareness of their needs. The Afiya Trust (Malek, 2011) described the omission of racism, racial bullying and racial harassment from the list of risk factors indicated by CAHMS for children and young peoples' mental health, as 'concerning', given that their previous work indicated that these are significant issues for BME young people. The independent CAMHs review (Ibid) confirmed that data regarding children and young people from BME groups is inconsistent and contradictory which led Malek (Ibid) to recommend BME children, young people and their families be actively engaged in the planning, development, delivery and review of mental health provision (p13).

Beck (2006), in her study of young peoples' views of mental services reports many young people in care are put off attending CAMHS in the belief that using this service might mean that they were 'mad'. Young people also told researchers that they were

unaware of how to access the service, and that CAMHS' bad reputation, and difficulty getting to appointments, also put them off. These areas are consistent with the findings of the review of CAMHS conducted in 2008 (DfCSF, 2008). In Beck's study (2006), LAC rated themselves as having more emotional problems than was reported by their carers who reported more behavioural problems. Beck was of the opinion that '*it may be that if carers were more aware of young people's internal experiences that they would be less inclined to view their problems solely in behavioural terms.*' (p60). This was supported by a foster carer manager quoted in Bazalgette et al (2015): *Whenever it comes to the emotional side, foster carers find that very difficult. I think that's why they've enjoyed the [CAMHS training] because it's really focused on the emotional wellbeing of children (p.31).*

2.3.1: Emotional Well-Being and Black and Dual Heritage Looked after Children and Young people

Thomas Coram Research Institute reported the evidence on the impact of ethnicity on emotional well-being and mental health problems to be inconclusive (TCRU, 2007). Other researchers agree with this conclusion reporting that there is insufficient evidence, (compounded by low sample sizes) on the topic to draw reliable conclusions (Dogra et al., 2012). This is unsurprising and indeed formed part of the rationale for the present study as mentioned in Chapter 1. What is known for sure is that the largest minority ethnic groups amongst the looked after population in the UK is Black Caribbean, Black African and Mixed - African/Caribbean and white - (DfCSF, 2007). Yet, as indicated by Dogra (Ibid) there is a dearth of reliable information regarding the emotional and mental health needs of this group, prompting some (Vernon, in Malek, 2011) to question whether mainstream provision was currently addressing the social and cultural needs of black and minority groups sufficiently (p.1). The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (DOH, 2004), (which is a ten-year plan to achieve good mental health in all children) acknowledged that many mainstream services are not meeting the needs of BME children and young people. Standard 9 of the NSF (Promoting the Mental Health and Psychological Well-being of Children and Young People) was

expanded in a separate document (DoH, 2004a) which stated that the state was:
'*failing to meet the mental health needs of black and minority ethnic minority children and young people, and that services need to be sensitive to differences and ensure staff are equipped with the knowledge to work effectively with the different groups represented in the community they serve*' (DoH, 2004a p.13). CAMHS is central to achieving NSF targets in standard 9 and, in an evaluation of progress report (DoH, 2006), improvements were claimed in providing accessible mental health services for LAC, and in accessing black young people to specialist CAMHS provision (p48). However, this claim needs to be read in the context of the independent review of CAMHS services (DfCSF, 2008) mentioned above, and evidence presented elsewhere on the problems these young people face in accessing services (Beck, 2006, Malek, 2011).

As has been noted, few studies have focused on black and dual heritage looked-after young people and even fewer have attempted to elicit views direct from their perspective (Barn, 1993; Ince, 1998, Boushell, 2000, Robinson, 2000). Ince (1998) interviewed 10 black care leavers on their views of being looked after and identified a process that she called 'identity stripping'. This, she argued, left minority ethnic young people without a positive sense of identity and with long-term problems in making links with their communities. Robinson (2000) arrived at a different conclusion when she compared the racial attitudes and self-esteem of 40 black young people in care with 40 black young people living in the community in the West Midlands. Robinson found positive racial identity attitudes and self-esteem in both groups. These studies present contrasting evidence yet agree on one key point: that having a positive racial identity is strongly associated with emotional well-being.

Methodologically these studies differed in their approach but an examination of the respective approaches and methods potentially explains the difference in findings. Ince, for example, used a qualitative approach with black participants who had spent most of their time in care with white families or residential workers, whilst Robinson used a quantitative approach with a sample in an urban area placed close to home and family and with whom black staff worked. All of Ince's sample spoke of rejection and educational failure due to racism, lack of support from professionals in regard to

racism and bullying, a disconnect between them and their birth family and difficulty in reclaiming their identity as black people on leaving care. Robinson's study by contrast was not only more recent, but she focused on black children in residential care which she then compared to black young people in the community and found both groups to have relatively high self-esteem. Reflecting on possible explanations for the contrasting findings between the studies one factor may be the lapse in time and location. Ince's study took place in 1995 in two shire counties while Robinson collected data five years later from young people placed near their home communities and families in a city in the West Midlands. In addition, many of Robinson's care workers were black and actively worked to reinforce positive black identities and counteract the impact of racism. Possible lessons to draw from this comparison point to additional attention needed to consider closely the issue of transracial placements and placements away from communities and family. Ince's study raised issues for schools when working with black children in general and black children who are looked after in particular; ensuring connection to culture and ethnicity via role models, having staff to whom the young people could relate in terms of background, or at least providing education and training to carers and social workers on how important these issues are for black and dual heritage LAC.

While Ince (ibid) and Robinson (2000) targeted black voices, Munro (2001) gathered the views of looked-after young people in general to ascertain how far they considered that they had any power to influence their own lives. The study contained similar numbers of black and white respondents (7 black and 8 white) yet race and ethnicity was not considered as a focus for analysis and discussion. She made two references to race one of which reported the study's sole black male complaining that he felt stereotyped and feared on the street and that professionals regarded him as a problem even though he had no record of crime or violence. The other reference concerned the other black respondents raising the issue of ethnicity with her in regard to their desire for more contact with their birth family and the knowledge this gave them about their identity. This information is worth noting as the study was not a study into race and yet these young people wanted to get their voices heard about issues important to them but about which they were never asked. Given that this demographic predominates disproportionately amongst the looked after population

this group would have a lot to say about the extent to which the system meets their needs.

The views of the black male respondent reported in Munro's study (2001) and this individual's perception of the threat he posed to professionals and others could be described as 'felt oppression' and mirrors what Graham (2007) called the 'dominant discourse in social work' research which views individual black service users as a 'problem' rather than as a competent witness to their own lives (p.2). Graham is one of a small number of researchers who have deliberately designed studies aimed at challenging this perception of black youth.

Marginalisation of black youth in the literature and research agenda finds expression in a number of studies. A systematic review of 50 studies reporting the views of young people who had been looked after and their carers (Dickson et al, 2010) contained no main question or sub-question relating to ethnicity. Beck's (2006) survey reports views of young people and their carers, in Lambeth local authority, about their access to mental health services and experiences of those services. 44% of the sample was described as Black Caribbean (n.212, 27%) or African (n.134, 17%) yet, despite this, race was ignored as an issue worthy of comment - none of the questions to the young people or their carers or analyses and findings were specific to race. I would argue that if large studies such as this and the ONS (2003) continue to marginalise 'race' as a concept, the research knowledge base will continue to be limited, and policy makers will remain uninformed about the needs of black and minority ethnic groups. Having said that, Beck's findings did reveal a number of useful themes: first, that young people tended to identify and report emotional problems while their carers mentioned only external behaviours. This finding suggests that carers are missing what they do not see and as a result are pathologising behaviours, and completely missing or failing to consider internal psychological and emotional drivers that might help explain the conduct. The second theme was that while the young people valued contact with social workers, they said this was lacking (as did the carers). Finally, the study highlighted a major barrier to accessing support for both the young people and their carers in their shared belief that only 'mad' people use these mental health support services on offer. Hence terminology is important

when offering services or researching young people and their views and is the reason that this researcher changed the terminology early on, from 'mental health', to 'psychological', before settling on emotional wellbeing.

Using an innovative methodology not often found in the literature the Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS, 2008) held a 'health and wellbeing' day to gather the experiences of young people in care. Looked after young people aged between 12 and 21 along with their carers met and discussed, amongst other topics, their emotional and mental well-being. Information on the demographics of the young people involved was limited to 70% of them being Christian and 8% having a mental health condition. No information was given as to the racial, or for that matter gender, split of the group. Hence conclusions were unable to offer recommendations for policy makers or practitioners on meeting the needs of different ethnic minorities as the groups were treated as homogenous. This reinforces the view that most of the research into this area has tended to consider looked after young people as a homogeneous group and utilises a largely 'colour-blind' approach in which data from different ethnic groups is merged (Barn et al, 2005, La Valle et al 2012). This tendency towards homogenisation risks generating stereotypical assumptions and is something which young LAC particularly dislike (Blueprint Project, 2005). Graham (2007) notes how the marginal status of black children is often hidden under the surface of 'universality' and 'colour-blind approaches', which remain embedded in research agendas. Moreover, in treating LAC as homogenous many aetiological factors about the problems of different sub-groups of LAC can be missed, as many of these would be influenced by culture (for example, child rearing practices; discipline, gender roles and so on).

As a group dual heritage looked after children are under-researched particularly so for emotional well-being. Barn and Harman (2005) reviewing the discourse on 'mixedness' conclude: 'The dearth of research exploring the experiences of inter-racial youth, particularly those in vulnerable positions, must be addressed'. (Barn and Harman, 2005 p.1322). As one of the few researchers active in this area Barn (1993, 1997) had previously found evidence that dual-heritage young people and children entered care in greater numbers proportionately than any other 'racial' group. She also reported in the same studies, that the majority of the mixed parentage children in care

had a white single mother as sole carer and an absent black father (predominantly African Caribbean).

Current research supports that early finding and suggests, especially for mixed race children, that those who enter local authority care come from households headed by a white female single parent, many of whom have problems with mental health issues, drug dependency or domestic violence (Selwyn et al., 2010a). The high numbers of these children in care can be seen as an indicator of a lack of support networks for the white mother who may be bringing up the child/ren alone (Barn, 1999).

'*Although, there may be less stigma attached to having a mixed-parentage child than in the past, the everyday experiences of living in a 'race' conscious society undoubtedly have a considerable impact upon white mothers' ability to cope with the stresses generated in this environment.*' (Barn, 1999 p.277)

The Census of 2001 (ONS, 2001) was the first to include a 'mixed' category and recorded that 1.15% of the total UK population was mixed (Owen, 2005). The more recent 2011 census (ONS, 2012) recorded that the mixed population is the fastest growing minority ethnic group in England and Wales, now amounting to 2.2% of the population. The 2001 census recorded almost half (47.5%) of the mixed race population as being aged 15 and under and that the largest mixed group was white and black Caribbean (35.9% of all people who identified as mixed, (Owen, 2005). Most mixed race children live in London (33%) and are the most overrepresented group in care (Owen and Statham, 2009).

When it comes to gathering data dual heritage young people have tended to be subsumed in the 'black' or 'other' categories and not specifically targeted as a group in their own right. An exception was the National Children's Bureau (NCB) study (Morley and Street, 2014) which draws on first-hand accounts of 21 dual heritage people in the community and examines them in the context of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services risk and resilience data. The study reports that these children experience greater risks to their mental health and emotional well-being in their struggle to develop a positive identity.

The report confirms that schools do not understand mixed race children and their backgrounds and that the way teachers perceive them can lead to poor outcomes and that public services and practitioners are not sensitive enough to their needs. The authors argue that mixed-race children have needs similar to all black and minority ethnic children but their 'mixedness' has created additional risks to their mental health and emotional well-being.

Reflective Summary

It was interesting for me to discover that studies by Thomas Coram (2007) and Dogra (2012) highlight gaps in the literature that relate directly to the aims of this study. The question as to whether this demographic are getting their needs met is central as, without evidence as to what those needs are, the response must be in the negative. Some of these needs will be similar to all LAC but evidence from Barn (1993) and Ince (1998) (note these studies are over twenty years old) reminds us that there are indeed differences, which are currently being overlooked.

Of note here is the situation where researchers are handed samples (as opposed to selecting their own) that contain large numbers of black and dual heritage LAC, (this can be the majority of their respondents if based in a London borough), but fail to respond by altering their design to investigate whether there are any differences in responses according to ethnic background. I accept this cannot pertain for every study and indeed would not be appropriate, but researchers are missing many opportunities to find out more about different subgroups and improve system responses to these groups. Currently the default position seems to be a regression to a colour-blind approach that dominated UK policy assimilationist tendencies in the 1970s, which attempted to treat every one the same regardless of ethnicity but which in fact tended to mask racial inequalities, and led to inaction. Despite this, it can be seen that black and dual heritage LAC are keen to have their voices heard and nevertheless raise issues related to their ethnicity with researchers. Of course they cannot be confident that those views will get reported, much less considered as a basis for action. However, this literature tells me that they have something to say about their unique position. It also then becomes clear that researchers are failing this group, which might be directly linked to failings in social policy and social work practice.

2.4: Identity

Giddens, (1991) argues that having a strong sense of identity and a positive self-image is fundamental to emotional well-being as it is central to every person's sense of individuality. Erikson (1968) is perhaps best known for his work on identity formation in adolescent psychology. Along with other writers (Waterman, 1985) Erikson proposed that a primary task of adolescence is the development of an identity. However, his writings excluded black adolescents on the grounds that he lacked familiarity with negro youth (Ericson, 1964), this did not stop him however, from writing that a pathological denial of their roots is seminal to negro identity (Ibid). In theorising about black identity development arguably the most prominent model is

Cross' (1971, 1991, 1995) model of black identity formation (nigrescence theory) which suggest that a black identity is achieved through progressing through stages of racial consciousness: the first stage, which he calls the 'pre-encounter' stage, is where the person doesn't see himself or herself as black. They may not understand the concept or implications of racism as it applies to them. The second stage called 'post-encounter', is where the person seeks to find their black identity perhaps following an act of racism against them, which they now come to acknowledge its existence, and how it can affect them. The next stage he called 'immersion-emersion' and is where a pro-black/anti-white orientation is developed, this is followed by the final stage 'internalisation' where the person is now settled in their new black identity and has lost the anger from the previous stage (see Cross, 1995). The benefits of having a positive black identity according to Cross (1995) include:

1. Having an ability to defend and protect a person from psychological insults that stem from having to live in a racist society.

2. Providing a sense of belonging and social anchorage

3. Providing a foundation or point of departure for carrying out transactions with people, cultures and human situations beyond the world of blackness.

(p.113)

The model spawned the development of the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale, which was used for the first time in the UK by Robinson, (2000). Cross (1991, 1995) suggests that the post-encounter stage can be triggered from a series of micro-aggressions after which the individual decides to be 'Black,' and fully immerses himself or herself into black culture. The point is made that individuals can also stagnate at the immersion-emersion stage (Cross, 1991) or revert back to earlier stages in the model. Critics of this model challenge the assumption that identity development is a linear process (Constantine et al, 1998) and that it omits '*the possibility of integrating more than one racial or ethnic identity into one's sense of self*' (Robinson, 2000 p20). Having said that, the model may be useful to practitioners in helping to contextualise the development of a racial identity in black LAC. Awareness of the

different stages of the model may also help practitioners when assessing the impact of the LAC relationship with others.

In a similar fashion to Cross, Phinney (1990) proposed a model of stages of ethnic identity development based on three main stages across the lifespan: These stages include a stage of unexamined ethnic identity (individuals have unexamined positive or negative views of their ethnic group); an exploration stage (individuals have explored their group ethnic group membership and are clear as to the meaning of ethnicity in their life. Finally, the model ends with an identity achievement stage (where individuals hold a positive sense of ethnic group membership which is highly correlated with ethnic identity). The model therefore is designed to take people from childhood to adulthood, moving from one stage towards the next.

All children have a 'racial' and 'cultural' identity but due to the unequal and racist nature of society some children may need help to counter the negative messages and images they may face (Banks, 2003 p157). Knowing about their past, staying connected to birth families and getting help with making sense of their histories is accepted as an important part of direct work with children in care. Having knowledge and understanding of one's origins is an important component of developing a positive identity and self-esteem (Triseliotis, 1973). Where the young people are black or dual heritage, the importance is magnified given the racist nature of society. The first study (First Key, 1987) to look at young black peoples' experience of the care system reported on the children feeling confused about their identity due to a lack of cultural knowledge. Later, Ince, (1998) found much the same, and attributed it to racism in the child care system, and a lack of contact with their birth family and community which she termed 'displaced identity' when family links were broken. She noted however, that where older children enter care their sense of identity was already strong enough to survive. The formation of a positive identity is emotionally and psychologically crucial to ethnic minority children in a racist society (Bagley, 1993, Maxime, 1993, Smith, Atkins and Connell 2003) and race prejudice and negative projections from society's institutions (schools, welfare, police, media) damages the self-esteem of black young people and is exacerbated by the additional label of being in care. Boushel (1996) notes the emergence of a consensus by black psychologists on the connections between black youth developing positive black

identities and having high self-esteem (see also Phinney, 1990, and Robinson, 2000). It is also argued that self-esteem as a concept is more closely meshed with racial identity for black persons than other racial groups (Demo and Hughes, 1990). An additional danger of exposure to race prejudice and negative labels is that young people come to internalise this negativity (Jones and Waul in Crimmens and Milligan , 2005, Banks, 2003) and join in the demonization of their own ethnic background and in so doing devalue them-selves.

Ince's study (1998) used personal interviews with 10 black care leavers on their views of being looked after and identified a process that she called 'identity stripping'. This, she argued, left minority ethnic young people without a positive sense of identity and with long-term problems in making links with their communities. She noted that where black staff was present in the settings where the young people were placed that they felt more supported. In support, Barn (1997) found that black children placed in rural settings with white carers felt alienated and their emotional and psychological well-being was threatened. Ince concluded that the presence of racism in the care system restricts the development of a positive black identity (Ince, 1998) and creates a sense of powerlessness as needs go unmet.

In support, more recent research from Thorburn et al (2005) found that children and young people who feel visibly 'different' need help from carers in dealing with racism and discrimination. They also found that children and young people value living in a community where others share their heritage, and they also appreciate having a social worker from the same ethnic background as their own. Barn (2007) observes that black children growing up within a predominantly white society receive negative messages about being black and that they need a positive internal model of a 'Black' identity to counteract negative stereotypes.

Research from Voice for the Child in Care (2004) found that contact with birth families was crucial to establishing identity as birth families may be the only gateway through which a looked after young person can access their cultural and ethnic identity.

'*Even where family relationships were poor, family links, including those with brothers and sisters, grandparents and other members of the extended family, were very important to most.*' (DoH, 1998, p.59).

Similarly, Sinclair (2005) shows how black children living away from their birth families experience a sense of grief and loss, compared to those children who are able to maintain contact with their families and other black people. Jones and Waul (2005) reported that parents of black children often talked of the ways in which they felt 'pathologised' and excluded from their children's lives. The researchers identified positive work that could be done with families, to support a child's sense of identity and connection with their heritage. Robinson (2000) reminds us that low self-esteem, self-hatred and a negative racial identity have been traditionally attributed to black children and adults (p4). Yet, findings from the Voice of the Child in Care (2004a p5) found black young people in care expressing pride in their identities. They rejected victimhood and wanted to be treated with respect.

'*They want to know about their history, to learn about black achievers and to have positive black role models who have not subjugated blackness for achievement and status. They want black carers who will be kind to them and support them. They want to keep links with their families and to feel secure and comfortable in their skins and in the company of other black and minority people*'.
(Voice for the Child in Care 2004a, p.6)

Dual Heritage Young People and Identity

There is an on-going debate as to whether psychologically it is better for dual heritage young people to identify as being black. Barn and Harman (2006) identify two competing discourses in this ideological debate whereas Goodyer (2005) identifies three competing conceptualisations on this issue. For Barn and Harman (2006) the debate is conducted within a context in which mixed children are either viewed as black or where these children are allowed to claim a mixed identity. In a similar fashion, Goodyer (2005) identifies three competing conceptualisations of this group: the first is a 'colour-blind' conceptualisation where the background of the carer is of

secondary importance to the quality of care they can provide. Her second is a 'same-race' paradigm where the assumption is that white carers cannot successfully prepare black or mixed race children for the racism they will face. The final position is 'pragmatic' in which mixed race children have individualised needs and where the racial background of the carer may or may not be important according to the needs of the child.

Proponents of a black identity for dual heritage children (same race view) hold that position on the grounds that society perceives these children to be black and that it would be better for them if they conformed to that belief as to not do so would invite psychological disturbance (Maxime, 1993). Barn and Harman (2006, p1313) cite a passage from Maxime (1994) aimed at mixed race children: '*Do you know that when one of your parents is white and the other black, you will never be seen as white.*' The point is emphasised that adherents of the 'black' identity for mixed race children are 'essentialists' in that their ideological roots are anchored in black radicalism but which eschews the right of self-determination for this group. Moreover, this position can be criticised for encouraging mixed race young people to deny their full racial heritage.

By contrast Goodyer's (2006) 'pragmatic' conceptualisation is close to Barn and Harman's (2006) mixed perspective, which is located within a social constructionist theoretical perspective in that it supports the right of the individual to define their own reality through interaction with others. As such it opposes the view that mixed children should identify as black as the only natural way they can achieve a positive psychological state and identity. Where the child is encouraged to identify with both sides of their inheritance they are able to develop a sense of connectedness (Owusu-Bempah 1995). Furthermore there is evidence that suggests identity is more nuanced and fluid than at first thought and is influenced by context. In one study when mixed-race adolescents were asked to identify with a single race this was influenced by the racial composition of where they lived (Harris, 2001).

Katz and Treacher (2005) argue that dual heritage young people are more vulnerable than others because they are usually isolated from their families and less able to

access support from either community. The authors recommend a holistic theory of identity formation that includes:

- The global development of the child and their overall identity development
- Cultural issues (food, music etc.) how they are brought into the family and how they interact with race
- Family structure and dynamics, including the unconscious racialization of family processes
- The extended family and their acceptance of difference within the family
- The community and neighbourhood context
- The wider social context and how it changes from time to time
- Moral or ethical view on the politics of race

(Katz and Treacher, 2005, p58)

The notion of being socially competent with a fluid identity is captured by Song (2003) and Spencer (1997) when he says these young people may 'feel biracial at home, white amongst accepting white grandparents, and black amongst black relatives or in an all-white classroom' (p29).

Identity development in this group is seen by some to be complicated as a result of social processes that are seen to act against them seeing both sides of their heritage as positive (Pinderhughes, 1995). Fatimilehin's (1999) research with dual heritage teenagers (N.23) found that 43% of respondents self-identified as 'mixed-race'. Of note here is the finding that the older the young people were (above 16 years old) the more likely they would opt for an identity closer to black.

Poston (1990) puts forward a separate theory to explain identity development in mixed race people. Stage one is similar to Cross' (1995) model of 'nigrescence' described above and is where the young person has no awareness of themselves as a mixed race person. Stage 2 involves the young person making a choice, which may not in reality exist as others seek to impose an identity on the individual due to their physical features. The choice stage furthermore may be a time of crisis where the

individual can reject one or other side of their heritage or accept both. The third stage is one of denial where the person may be confused or guilty at having made a particular choice. The fourth stage is where the individual begins to explore the other rejected side of their heritage which can lead to the fifth stage which is that of integration where the person is able to acknowledge both sides of their racial heritage.

Critics of Poston's model point out that where a mixed race person makes a choice they may not be accepted and they first have to accept both sides of their heritage before choosing a side. They then have to develop strategies for dealing with rejection (Root, 1992). Root's (1996) theory of identity development differs from both Poston (1990) and Cross (1971) in that it eschews a linear stage development instead basing it on the individual's ability to cross back and forth between racial borders. Such fluidity found support from Renn (2003) who found college students either crossing racial borders or rejecting racial categories altogether (p.17)

Many dual heritage children are as the result of black/white unions and for the most part are considered by society to be black (Maxime, 1993). However, Robinson (2000) questioned this notion and accorded this group with their own identity separate from black. Other writers argue that a healthy positive identity can only be achieved for this group where both the black and white sides of their racial heritage are viewed as positive (Root, 1992). Past research with mixed race children confirmed that they experience high self-esteem and positive identities (Tizard and Phoenix 1993). Later studies challenged this and found that dual heritage young people are more likely to enter care than other groups and once there, have low self-esteem and may exhibit identity confusion (Barn et al, 1997).

One reason put forward for this identity confusion is because society sees them as black children, which has led some researchers to call for this group to be classified as black (Maxime, 1993). A position that itself has attracted criticism for being nothing but a reification of the *'one drop rule'* (Owusu-Bempah, 2005). To illustrate the fluid complexity of this issue one young person narrates her search for an identity acceptable to her:

'*My gran is Jamaican and she was the first black person we lived with ... Before I lived with her I didn't think of myself as black, I saw myself as white. But when my gran told me about my granddad I thought I'm proud of my colour. I am mixed race but I class myself as black.*' (Barn et al 2005).

The above quote illustrates well Banks' (2003) point that for mixed race young people it is their subjective socialisation that has the most impact on how they view themselves in relation to others.

Barn et al's study (2005) reports how agencies recognise the importance of matching young people with social workers from the same ethnic background and noted that where young people in their study asked for this the service providers complied. It was noticed however, that many young people seemed less concerned about the ethnic background of the social worker but more interested in the quality of services they provided. When it comes to matching carers, the area is equally complex, and trying to match carers with children of the same background may not always be in the children's best interest (Granville and Miller 2006), not least where dual heritage young people are assumed to be black. '*Young people of mixed heritage who do not see themselves as black should not be pathologised as suffering from 'identity confusion*' (Biehal et al, 1995, p.129). The same study reports that some 'mixed-race' young people feel that neither the black nor white community accepts them and that, as a result, their ethnic identities are complex and shift over time. The point was made that for these young people, their identity is often linked to individuals in their family who they either accepted or rejected (Ibid). As banks (2003) observes, '*a racial identity cannot be forced. It must be socially viable and psychologically satisfying*' (p.159). In other words childcare workers political understandings of the term 'black' should not be imposed on young people who may be 'operating at a concrete cognitive level and see themselves in literal colour terms of 'brown' (Banks, 2003 p159).

Transracial placement has a long history in the UK, which for the most part has swung to and forth from transracial placement to same race placement (Kirton, 2000). Transracial placement was the norm for black and mixed race children who needed fostering or adoption from the 1950s to the 1970s in the face of large numbers of such

children needing placements and not enough black carers being sought or found (Triseliotis, et al 1997). Resistance to this 'internal colonialism' (ABSWAB, 1983) triggered a period of change in the 1980s to one of same race placements amid claims that transracially placed black children had become 'white in all but skin colour', (Gill and Jackson, 1983). The pendulum then swung back to transracial placements with the election of the Labour Government in 1997 and the attack by the new health minister Paul Boateng MP on same race policies in effect saying the 'love is enough' (in Kirton, 2000, p 31).

Dual heritage young people may cut-across categories of race, ethnicity, religion and language making a 'perfect ethnic match' impossible (Selwyn et al, 2010a; Simmonds, 2010). Selwyn et al. (2010a) notes that some mixed children are easier to place because of their pale skin colour. Adoption guidance since 2011 has given increased support to transracial adoption and fostering (see for example, Department for Education, 2010a) even in the face of research that suggests ethnic matching to be beneficial psychologically for the young people involved (Thorburn et al, 2000). On the other hand research can also be cited that suggests transracial placements can be successful (Selwyn et al, 2010a, Quinton, 2010). Given the history of this issue it is perhaps unsurprising that the literature is mixed on the issue of transracial placements. SCIE (2005) summarises the issue by stating that on the whole young people and carers believe being in foster care presents enough challenges without the extra one of living in a family with a different ethnicity and culture (SCIE, 2005). Young people say that whatever racial background they are, they want carers to value and respect their identity and past experiences, and are critical of tokenistic efforts: '*I mean all right you might put a picture of a black person up on the wall but that isn't giving you your roots' (Barn et al, 2005)*. Maintaining contact with siblings and birth family helps this process, as long as it is a positive experience (Sinclair, 2005). Contact with both parents is particularly important for children of mixed race parentage who often feel that they have lost out on one aspect of their background (Sinclair, 2005).

A number of researchers (Wainwright and Ridley, 2012; Barn and Harman, 2005, Selwyn et al, 2010a) have noted how, given the complexity of matching black and dual heritage LAC, it makes sense to adopt a more flexible approach to the process. One that takes into consideration the influence of the extended family, social

networks and friendships, dynamics of acceptance within the family and degree of social capital (Barn and Harman, 2005 p1322). A preoccupation with transracial versus same race placement is seen to oversimplify an issue that is both political and moral (Wainwright and Ridley, 2012). Barn and Kirton are equally strident in their call for Government to be more flexible in its approach to matching:

'Unless and until politicians and policy makers begin to understand the nuanced nature of permanence and stability for minority ethnic children in care, simplistic and popular notions of transracial adoption as a 'one-glove-fits all' strategy will prevail. Such a notion is not only misguided, it prevents the development of other possible solutions.' (Barn and Kirton, 2012).

Sinclair (2005) found that black children were able to make sense of their history if they were in contact with their families and other black people, if not they tended to put these issues on the 'back burner'. The point is made repeatedly that black and dual heritage children needed extra help to make sense of their identity and history if they were placed with white carers (Thorburn, et al, 2005). Young people themselves spoke about how hard it was to be cared for by a white family and how they felt alienated and had difficulties with social and personal relationships, as well as their mental health (Sinclair, 2005). Consistent with this need to make sense of who they are, Munro (2001) found that the issue of ethnicity was raised by her sample of black LAC in relation to their stated desire for contact with their birth families and the knowledge this gave them about their identity and culture (p133). As Quinton (2012) points out, at the centre of the debates regarding transracial or same race placement lie the rights of black communities to bring up their own children within their culture which are moral and ethical issues.

However, some have suggested that a focus on identity runs the danger of ignoring other structural reasons for black children's difficulties. When the focus is on factors 'inside' the child as a site to 'work on' more institutionally based reasons and causal factor such as separation and loss are not considered. This may result in black children being referred for identity work and their problems attributed to their colour (Owusu-Bempah, 2006) when other factors also play a part in their difficulties.

2.4.2: Attachment and Identity

Selwyn and Riley (2015) conducted a literature review on children and young people's views on being in care and identified ninety-seven studies that sought children's views on various topics on their journey through care that affected them. These studies were included because they included young people's own voices. Four primary themes were identified from these studies: relationships, respect, rights and responsibility – each of which produced a number of sub-themes. A key theme identified was maintaining and developing positive relationships with adults, friends, and family members and for these relationships to be loving, caring and affectionate (p1). In addition, respondents felt that professionals (including carers) paid little attention to helping them maintain long-standing relationships and this led to feelings of abandonment (p1) and may have contributed to a lack of attachment figures in young people's lives.

Attachment theory offers a framework for making sense of the impact of adverse experiences on LAC (Atwool, 2006). Bowlby (1969) stated that through consistent, sensitive and responsive interactions with their caregiver, LAC children are able to develop a secure attachment, which then provides a model from which they can interact with the world with self-assurance. It also links the value of a long-term relationship to the child's need for continuity and a secure base (Schofield and Beek, 2009). Consequently, attachment as a theory has long been recognised as an essential component in social and emotional development (Golding, 2008). Caution must be exercised however, as to the universal application of attachment theory in a multi-cultural context. Evidence suggests that the strange situation attachment patterns developed by Ainsworth (1978) differs in the percentage of children falling into each of the attachment categories depending on which cultural context it is applied in (Cole, 1998). Sagi (1990, in Robinson, 2007), states that '*we can conclude that attachment theory is useful in the broader sense but always must be applied within the context of cultural idiosyncrasies*' (p26). Indeed, the notion that having a secure attachment as the 'ideal' attachment pattern has been challenged on the grounds that cultures differ in their notion of the 'ideal' (Robinson, 2007).

Some young people have been reported as having benefitted from their experiences in care in that it provided stability in an otherwise chaotic world and provided at least one secure attachment figure (Stein, 2005). Rutter et al (1998) would argue that these children have accumulated resilience-promoting factors. Even though the link between stability, resilience and secure attachments is unclear many resilient LAC have had stability in their lives and some have had compensatory secure attachments through long-term foster carers (Stein, 2005). Providing stability and continuity may be as important as secure attachment depending on the characteristics of the young people involved. Hence selecting the best placement taking into consideration race, religion, and language may best promote secure attachments and thus contribute to stability of placement (Department for Education and Skills 2007).

Placement instability on the other hand creates a number of problems. It acts against developing secure attachments (Leathers, 2002; Schofield and Beek, 2005): it compounds existing emotional problems (Schofield and Beek, 2005); it can lead to cultural denial (Barn, 2007); and is likely to be a harbinger of insecure attachments in later life (Golding, 2008). For black and dual heritage LAC instability can contribute to further isolation from the black community and place them at further risk of disadvantage in life (Barn et al, 2005). Additionally, insecure attachments may lead some LAC and young people to become skilled at hiding their feelings. They may avoid emotional encounters, stiffen when held and become emotionally detached. Constant rejection and being let down means they view the world through a dominant attachment pattern in which all behaviours are filtered through their previous experiences of being failed (Gaskell, 2010, p142).

Caregivers' attitudes to the importance of attachment issues is key and can influence their recognition of symptoms and their willingness to access help (Dozier and Sepulveda, 2004). Caregivers without secure attachments in their own life may find it difficult to respond to a child in a way that will best promote the formation of a secure attachment. When a caregiver is sensitive to a child's emotional needs and responds positively, this helps the child to develop a sense of being loved and lovable. Oke et al (2013) confirmed in their study that foster carers were keen to form emotional bonds

and have young people experience a sense of belonging within the family. This is consistent with facilitating secure attachments.

Positive attachments help children to attain their full intellectual potential, to develop social emotions and to begin to trust others. They are better able to cope with traumatic experiences when they have experienced feeling safe and protected (Howe, 2005). Quality relationships facilitate self-reliance, resilience, self-worth, and enable young people to develop better coping mechanisms to deal with frustration, envy and jealousy and overcome common fears and worries. Where a child is securely attached to at least one care giver they can more easily develop attachments to others (Howe, Ibid).

Barth et al (2005) remind us of the limited evidence base for predicting the long-term behaviour of maltreated children using attachment theory, and cautions against its misdirected use in justifying a one-sided focus on getting children to adjust their behaviour to caregivers. The way a child reacts in a distressing situation, how they react to a new carer's attempts to offer care are all influenced by the type of attachments they formed in past relationships.

A child who is cared for by someone who both loves them and sensitively responds to their needs is able to develop emotional management, empathy and understanding of non-verbal cues (Gerhardt, 2004). However, if the primary attachment is a traumatic one, future relationships can also be impaired (Bowlby, 1969, Gerhardt, 2004). Bell (2002) uses the concept of 'secondary attachment' to describe the child– social worker relationship. Social workers are well placed to provide this attachment figure as their relationship with children reflects aspects of a parental role. In her study of children involved in the child protection system Bell (2002) found that the needs of the children were more likely to be met where relationships with professionals were supportive. The same is true of teachers in that the relationships they form with children can help those with attachment problems (Bomber, 2007) and are vital to their chances of success (DfES, 2006). The intermittent nature of teacher/pupil interaction in secondary school may well explain why LAC behavioural problems appear to intensify as they move through the school years.

2.5 Emotional (Un)Availability

Concepts like attachment and bonding are important contributors to the debates on educational achievements of LAC and inform us that very little learning can occur where emotional instability is present. Hence, emotional wellbeing and mental health as predictors of educational success should be prioritised (Cameron and Maginn 2011).

Emotional well-being, social adjustment and educational attainment are inextricably linked argue Cameron and Maginn (2011) and it is only by constantly experiencing good parenting and appropriate emotional support that children and young people in care will be able to develop personally, socially and intellectually' (p1154).

Reflecting this, Rohner (2004) argues that children and young people, regardless of background, need warm positive acceptance from their care givers and parents and, where this is lacking, report themselves as hostile, aggressive, lacking self-esteem and emotionally unresponsive. Rohner's Parental -Acceptance–Rejection Theory (PAR Theory) refers to a bi-polar dimension of parental warmth, with parental acceptance at one end and parental rejection at the other. Rohner argues that the warmth dimension is concerned with the quality of the affection bond between parents and their children, and the physical, verbal and non-verbal behaviour of parents, which accompany these feelings.

The theory helps to explain anger and adverse behaviour from looked after children who feel rejected or abandoned by parents and the system:

'Children who experience or perceive significant rejection are likely to feel ever-increasing anger, resentment and other destructive emotions that may become intensely painful. As a result, rejected children tend to suppress these painful emotions in an effort to protect themselves from the hurt of further rejection, i.e. they become less emotionally responsive. In doing so, they often have problems with being able or willing to express affection and warmth and in knowing how to give, or even being capable of accepting these positive emotions from others.' (Cameron and

Maginn 2009 p.11)

Parental Acceptance–Rejection Theory holds that all children need to feel accepted and when this need is not met, children worldwide regardless of culture, gender, age or ethnicity, can present as hostile, aggressive, and lacking in self-esteem. They shut-down and become emotionally unresponsive (Rohner et al 2004).

Furthermore, argues Rohner, children who experience rejection will tend to suppress their painful emotions in an effort to protect themselves from the hurt of further rejection. In doing so, they often have problems with being able or willing to express affection and warmth and in knowing how to give, or even being capable of accepting these positive emotions from others. This is given powerful voice by a young person in Stein and Carey's study (1986):

I've got a great big space around me which is mine and nobody enters, and why I don't know – whether it comes from care, having been let down so many times, or living with people for so many years and them going, and you never see them again…you build up a barrier in order to protect yourself, which is wrong, but you're only human, because you get hurt so many times. People try to break it, to get in, and you don't let them because you're frightened that it's going to happen again and that you're going to get let down or hurt again, and that's it with me you see. I never get to know people.

Rohner suggests that professionals should help parents and other care-givers to communicate acceptance to children and also help them to find culturally appropriate ways to communicate warmth and affection. PAR theory correlates strongly to attachment theory (Rutter 1979), in that both predict consequences of rejection as psychological maladjustment, insecure attachments and as linking to emotional, social and behavioural problems (Howe 2005; Rohner et al 2004).

The usefulness of PAR theory to the current study becomes clear. Finding culturally appropriate ways to communicate warmth and affection to black and dual heritage LAC goes to the heart of the matter. When carers provide emotional warmth (attuned to the child's needs) combined with authoritative parenting (Baumrind 1993) this can

counter negative school experiences, poor social development and increase emotional wellbeing. There are said to be four parenting styles: indulgent, neglectful, authoritarian and authoritative (Baumrind 1993). Authoritative parenting combines a high level of support with high parental sensitivity. This style uses non-punitive punishments and expects mature behaviour, it establishes firm rules, which are enforced and offers warm and caring support.

The question over whether authentic warmth can be provided by paid carers is the subject of a number of studies (Kirton, 2001, McDermaid et al 2012, Peake and Townsend). The juxtaposition of 'parenting' and 'job' in the role of a carer and the way payment is perceived by those looked after is significant and can get in the way of developing a genuine relationship. McDermaid et al (2012) suggest that most carers are not motivated by payment, but that the payments are important enough for many to rely on the fees as their sole or main household income. The question therefore is whether payment compromises the quality of care offered? And, if so to what degree? These are incredibly difficult questions to answer but a number of researchers have tried. Kirton (2001, p202) reported carers being split on the issue:

'Definitely doing a job. We are encouraged not to think of ourselves as parents any more. That is not the job you do. Our job is . . . a lot of the time to rehab home, or to share care.' And, *'I actually spent two weeks solid in hospital last year with one little girl that we had with a broken leg. And I slept there. Now, if that was a job I would've come home every night and clocked off. But you don't. You're there all the time.'* (p.202).

Kirton's findings are challenged by more recent research by Sebba, (2012) in a review of international literature on why people become foster carers? Sebba found that people most often consider non-kinship fostering as a result of knowing other foster carers; that they need better information in order to combat myths about fostering, and that there is a general lack of support for foster carers (p5). On the issue of finance Sebba (ibid) reports carers as being intrinsically motivated and that income generation is not a principal motivation, although her review did point to the role of finance in retaining carers. However, the literature in this regard failed to distinguish between

payments across socioeconomic groups and ethnicities. Where inequality exists in society some groups are more likely to be unemployed than others, and combined with reduced access to alternative forms of income, this may act as a motivator to foster. How genuine would their motivation be in the absence of alternatives? Or is this immaterial? This area is ripe for more research on these questions.

One way to increase quality of care is to ensure adequate training for all carers especially in psychologically oriented theories. This would reduce the potential harm done by those carers attracted to the role for extrinsic reasons. Trained carers will need knowledge, for example, of the effects of post-traumatic stress as they will need to understand what is going on when a child repeatedly rejects them and any demonstration of kindness and affection. Certainly what PAR theory does is place the carer at the heart of any support provided for the LAC. Rushton and Minnis (2002) underlined this when they concluded that the only interventions with demonstrated effectiveness in reducing the emotional and behavioural problems of looked after children were those delivered either in close liaison with, or directly through, the foster-carers themselves.

Carers need personal skills and professional expertise in order to provide authentic warmth to difficult and rejecting children. This expertise Cameron and Maginn (2008) argue is rooted in psychology. Providing support and consultation to carers is preferable to an exclusive focus on the child. Cameron and Maginn developed the 'Pillars of Parenting' model. They suggest that these are seven pillars that empower care staff to engage with a child therapeutically and provide 'authentic warmth' in the absence of which, poor behaviour and educational failure ensue. Such parenting will enable a child to feel that someone cares about him or her rather than just 'looking after' him or her. This can then enable young people to deal with rejection, separation, the need to belong, loss and abuse. It is only then that they can settle into their education and plan their futures with optimism.

The seven Pillars developed by Cameron and Maginn (2008) are: primary care and protection, secure attachment, positive self-perception, emotional competence, self management skills, resilience and a sense of belonging (see Cameron and Maginn,

2008 and Cameron and Maginn 2009). Under each Pillar are behaviours that care staff can adopt to promote that Pillar. These pillars map well with Every Child Matters Outcomes (Department for Education and Skills 2003) and the 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' (2000) 'Child's Developmental Needs' Domain. Warm parenting and sensitive timely support throughout their care careers is regarded as an essential requirement for the emotional and psychological well-being of children in care.

A minority of studies has examined the factors leading to successful outcomes for LAC (see Happer et al 2006 for a Scottish perspective, and Stein, 2005). A useful contribution to that small literature comes from Allen (2003) who interviewed 36 'successful' care leavers and focused on the resilience and determination shown by those considered to be economically successful. Many of her respondents cited valuing professional, informal and emotional supports in enabling their relative success. A key implication for policy and practice to facilitate chances of success was for those responsible to develop support that tackles young people's emotional and behavioural problems before they become entrenched (p10).

A similar study to Allen's reported on the opinions of 38 high achieving care experienced young people (12 men and 26 women, possessing A-levels, degrees, higher degrees and a PhD) (Martin and Jackson, 2002). They too highlighted the importance of supportive but unobtrusive adult help and support. Concerns were expressed about negative stereotypes and low expectation among professionals and poor resourcing of necessities needed for study, which reduced opportunities. The most frequent advice given by the sample was the necessity for a child to receive positive encouragement from significant others. Most stressed the importance of carers or parents showing an active interest in education and giving children support and encouragement to do well. Using mixed methods, Barn et al (2005) investigated the post care experiences of 261 young people from minority ethnic and white people in England. Their findings suggest that black LAC achieved greater levels of stability in care supported by same race placements in contrast to dual heritage LAC who experienced severe disruption in placements. Interestingly, although investigating care leavers, Barn et al's study (Ibid), reported a number of issues related to in-care experiences. For example, respondents felt that their culture and race had been

ignored during their placements and that, for dual heritage LAC in particular, this was a missed opportunity for contributing to them developing a secure individual and group identity.

In a study that focused on the University level, Jackson et al (2004) reported on a three-year longitudinal study of 129 young people in University who had been in care. Recommendations focused on types of supports the students felt should be made available to ex-care students. Reference was also made to the deprivation of educational opportunity care leavers have to contend with compared to young people not in care. The students' resilience in persisting with their studies despite poverty, ill health and family problems was highlighted.

Reflective Summary

Reflecting on my time as a residential social worker and a social worker in a child guidance unit, I met many young people in care who were angry at the world and were referred because their school and/or parent could no longer cope with the young person's behaviour. At that time the team tried to understand the drivers for the behaviour through a systemic approach drawing on solution focused and family systems therapy and these are therapeutic approaches that I believe all foster carers need to be trained in. PAR theory seems to me to draw on some of these theoretical understandings and so deserves to be supported. Parental rejection, real or imagined, for young people cut adrift from their birth family, has implications psychologically, socially, and emotionally. In my experience only a few exceptional foster carers are able to replicate authentic unconditional love for LAC. But I believe part of the child's recovery is through such relationships. It is about 'caring about' rather than 'caring for' a child. Where the child is black or dual heritage this aspect of their identity needs to be actively integrated to demonstrate acceptance as they are, and crucially demonstrate that they 'belong'. My view is that these children are in 'survival mode' and often feel stressed, anxious, and insecure, but mask it through behaviour that keeps the world at bay.

2.6: Role of Schooling

'The dismal performance of children in public care is perhaps the longest-running scandal of our education system' (Slater, 2002, p. 24)

Indeed, the effects of being in care are most clearly visible in relation to schooling and educational outcomes (Fletcher 1993). The importance of positive school experiences in influencing outcomes for LAC has long been formally recognised (Department for Children Schools and Family, 2009, Department for Education, 2010, Social Exclusion Unit 2003, Bostock 2004). Yet despite being a 'priority group' for Government' of all political stripes the poor outcomes for LAC persist. The attainment gap between looked after and non-looked after young people has narrowed slightly but LAC still achieve poorer attainment levels than their non 'looked after" peers at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 (Department for Children Schools and Family 2014). At GCSE level the gap in attainment in 2008/09 was 38% but in 2012/13 the gap widened to 43% (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts HC809 2015 p8) prompting Ofsted to describe the level of educational attainment among children in care to be "shockingly poor", and the gap between them and their peers to be "shockingly wide" (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts HC809 2015 p.17). It is argued that LAC bring many problems into school as a result of their pre-care experiences (Sempik et al 2008) and that it would be wrong to blame the care and educational system for the pupils' poor functioning (Hannon et al, 2010). However, it is precisely because these children are vulnerable that their schooling becomes all the more important as a means of support that can contribute to their wellbeing and normalisation. But many of these vulnerable young people '*paint a picture of school experience adding to the turmoil of coming into care, rather than being a potential source of stability'* (Borland et al., 1998, p. 56). Educational success echoes beyond the school gates, impacts on the quality and enjoyment of life, and is seen to be a predictor of success and achievement in later life (Berridge 2012). By contrast poor school experiences causes long-term problems, which can lead to a form of 'second class citizenship' and social exclusion (McParlin 1996 p115). Educational outcomes for LAC vary, with those in stable placements: girls, children placed in their

own authority, and those where the placement is in foster care tending to do better (Social Exclusion Unit 2003).

Emotional wellbeing lays the foundations for educational success and helps prevent behavioural problems (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2013). The importance of school to the emotional wellbeing of LAC is highlighted here to stress the 'whole system response' responsibility that includes education and health and not just social services. Fletcher-Campbell et al (2004) reviews the features of care and education systems and the poor outcomes for LAC. They identified a number of recurring themes: the failure of corporate parenting at policy and individual levels, inappropriate expectations, placement instability, disrupted schooling and a failure to prioritise education.

The failure of the state as 'good enough' parents has been well documented, as has the effect of low expectations on groups of vulnerable young people. One area of corporate parenting highlighted by Fletcher-Campbell et al (Ibid) is the lack of partnership working between teachers and social workers. Weilding (2005) reported that teachers working collaboratively with other professionals was '*not common*' (p.6). When asked why they do not work more collaboratively with other professional teachers most often cited a lack of time as the main reason (Ibid). One primary school teacher said '*Having had to try to contact and speak to a social worker this term I have found it impossible. The only access to a phone is at lunch or after school and social workers are very stressed people...I don't know how you could work closer together if you can't speak to each other* (p.13). Teachers told Weiding (Ibid) that they would like to work more collaboratively with other professionals, but repeatedly made the point that they would also like to work together more often with their own colleagues in the same school. The study reported that significantly more primary teachers welcomed greater collaboration with childcare professionals than secondary school teachers (18.6% against 4.1%), which the author attributed to the age of the children in each sector. Practical strategies aimed at overcoming the lack of time to work in partnership suggested by teachers included schools providing more administrative support to them, as well as more classroom assistants and less contact time.

One topic that recurs often in the literature is that of frequent moves between care placements having a negative impact on the ability of LAC to achieve positive outcomes

(DfES, 2006, NICE, 2010). Conversely where a looked after young person experiences stability in placement their educational attainment improves (Jackson and Cameron, 2012). The UK Government's criteria for stable placement is that a child or young person has been continuously looked after by a Local Authority for four years and has remained in the same placement for two years (DfE, 2006). Stability of placement and remaining in the same school when a placement change becomes necessary is key in providing continuity. Foster carers whose parenting styles are organised and positive and show consistent emotional availability and sensitivity record fewer disruptions of placement (Chamberlain et al 2006). Inclusivity in terms of foster family relations with the fostered child, has been shown to exert a beneficial effect on placement stability (Leathers, 2006).

Regular school attendance is essential for academic success, but not always given sufficient importance by social workers (Fletcher-Campbell 1997). From an emotional perspective, constant moves hinder a child's ability to form attachments and enter into relationships with carers, social workers, teachers and peers alike. Stability of placement is a crucial aspect of the emotional repairing necessary after early childhood trauma. In a 1993 study of over 600 young people in care, Fletcher (Ibid) found 'deeply disturbing' (p25) experiences of bullying, stigmatization and non-attendance. This was echoed by the Community Education Development Centre's report (2001) that stated that whilst schools could provide a positive experience, they could also be a: '*lottery for the young person in public care. It can be a place to be normal, to make friends and to succeed. But because of ineffective communication, it can also be a place where bullying, intrusive questioning, low expectations and discrimination are rife.*' (CEDC, 2001 p.10). On a more positive note, Fletcher found that being in care for some increased motivation to attend school, increased performance and the young people welcomed the level of support they received. For many, she stated, '*being in care provided a semblance of continuity in otherwise uncertain circumstances*'. However, the children and young people did not like the disruptive effect of placement moves or the emotional load of having to cope with separation from family. A follow up survey by Shaw (1998) reported 25% of her sample as saying they were treated differently at school because they were in care but more positively 50% thought their care experience had improved their school

performance. Similarly, Happer et al (2006) reported mostly positive experiences for LAC in their sample.

A similar study to Fletcher's (1993) was conducted in Scotland (Who Cares, 2004) on a sample of 170 children and young people aged 7-18. Most were found to hold high hopes for educational success and reported having positive relationships with some teachers as being a key motivation. However, 10% of respondents had become disengaged from school for a year or more and many, as in Fletchers' study, described episodes of bullying, exclusion and stigmatisation that had contributed to their disengagement.

Foster carers emerge as crucial to educational aspirations in children in care, not only in the emotional support and practical arrangements made to support schoolwork but also in their encouragement or lack of it. One consistent explanation given for the lack of encouragement by carers is that some are educated to a poor standard themselves, and lack the social capital needed to have their young people achieve good qualifications (Martin and Jackson 2002). Heath et al. (1994) found that the educational level of foster carers was the most important factor in enabling children in care to catch up with their peers. Illustrating the need for 'joined up' working between agencies, Couling (2000) found that LAC want the school and their carer to work closely to prevent things 'going wrong,' and that close liaison between the school and carers demonstrated to LAC that their carer valued their education. Of note here is the finding that LAC successful educational experiences relied less on academic ability, than on them being well supported by the carer, teacher, social worker and school to reach their potential (Couling, 2000 p.33).

In their study of school children and being mixed race, Tizard and Phoenix (2002) suggest that teachers and school policies can have an important *influence on children's identities'* (p. 235). Tickly et al (2004) in a similar study involving fourteen schools in Birmingham found that dual heritage white/Asian students to be above average in achievement while dual heritage white/Black (Caribbean) pupils to be below average. The authors concluded that the barriers to achievement of white/black Caribbean group was the same as those for black Caribbean pupils and that these reasons included social disadvantage, institutionalised racism, low teacher

expectation and high school exclusion rates. Tickly and colleagues observe that dual heritage pupils experienced racism, not only from the teachers, but from their peers, both black and white. Teachers interviewed located the problems of mixed race pupils as coming from within the children themselves due to identity issues. Assumptions from teachers about the majority of this group tended to reflect a pathological view of living in single parent households headed by a white mother – which was incorrect. Tickly et al (ibid) illustrate starkly how teacher racism as part of an institutional embedded racism interacts with peer judgment leading to a downward spiral of poor achievement and behaviour resulting in high exclusions and provision of alternative schooling.

2.6.1: Exclusions

Although the overall trend for exclusions from school for looked after children is falling, the permanent exclusion rate is nearly twice as high as for other children, and fixed term exclusions are over five times as high (Department for Education 2014 p14). Allied to this disproportionality in official exclusions is the fact that evidence exists (Office of the Children's Commissioner 2012) that unofficial exclusions (where parents are summoned and given little choice but to remove their child from the school) are used alongside official exclusions and that these disproportionately affect black pupils (Ibid). These unofficial exclusions serve to mask the real figures in this area so that statistics regarding the fall in permanent exclusions must be treated with caution.

The variation in educational achievement (particularly for black male students) is also linked to high exclusion (or suspension) rates (Wright et al. 2010). For black pupils who are not looked-after the proportion of excluded pupils has increased, and more rapidly since 2000 than any other group (Department for Education and Skills 2006). Research from Parsons (2000) found that black excluded pupils were less likely to fit the typical profile of white excluded pupils, in other words white pupils have to give the school additional reasons to exclude them than black pupils (Majors 2001). The Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012) found that in 2009-10, if you were a

Black African-Caribbean boy with special needs and eligible for free school meals you were 168 times more likely to be permanently excluded from a state-funded school than a White girl without special needs from a middle class family. Thus, evidence confirms that where black pupils are looked-after, whether they have additional risk factors or not, their chances of being excluded from school rise significantly - attributable directly to them being black rather than being poor. Indeed, policy makers have arrived at that same conclusion:

> *This evidence challenges the assumption that racial inequalities in education are merely a reflection of socio-economic inequalities in society. It makes a compelling case for the existence of an "X-factor", related to ethnicity, which explains the exclusions gap.*

(Department for Education and Skills 2006, p10)

Later in the same report this "X-factor" is named as racism and the evidence for this described as 'compelling' - a conclusion reached by the Swann report over thirty years earlier (Swann 1985). Indeed the report (Department for Education and Skills 2006) describes exclusion as an iconic issue for black Caribbeans and draws parallels with stop-and-search data in criminal justice. The marginal status of race equality is explained through being dismissed by many schools as 'politically correct nonsense' (p. 20). This is regardless of the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) with which schools must comply. The report's authors come out in favour of focusing on school factors to rectify the exclusion gap problem and reject the alternative argument, that it is the black pupils themselves who are the problem. The term Institutionally Racist (IR) was used to describe schools that did not 'get it' meaning they failed to understand how their practices and procedures, albeit done with good intent, nevertheless led to unequal outcomes. Teacher unions were 'outraged' and rejected the report and its findings (Merrick 2006).

The honesty of the report was a breath of fresh air to race campaigners who had long argued the case of race bias in school against black children (Coard, 1971). The

argument contained in the report (Department for Education and Skills 2006) is that racism in schools is largely unintentional and stems from long-standing social conditioning involving negative images of black people (particularly males), which stereotype them as threatening. Such conditioning is reinforced by the media portrayal of black 'street culture'. Using this analysis, it is possible to explain the overrepresentation of black pupils in school exclusion data. In addition to being black, black Looked-after children have an additional stigma to contend with, and report labelling and stigmatisation from teachers in a number of studies (Barnados 2006; Harker et al 2003).

One reason put forward as to why the exclusions gap exists is that there is a tendency for organisations to be colour-blind. They tend to operate a 'one size fits all' approach, which ignores issues specific to subgroups of pupils and to assume that a general policy will benefit all groups to the same extent (Department for Education and Skills, 2006 p19). This approach, mentioned above, proceeds on the basis that race differences do not matter and that acting as if it does encourages unfair preferential treatment. However, discrimination occurs not just by active intent but also by subconscious actions, omissions and lack of consideration that actually reinforces discrimination (Aymer and Okitipiki 2010). Such an approach colludes in masking racial disparities. Where the impact of policies impact on different groups differently such disparities will be hidden under the illusion of equity for all.

2.6.2: Low Expectations

Francis (2000), writing about the Scottish experience, reports that some school staff hold low expectations of looked after children but states that this is not the cause of educational failure for this group. Francis argues that the low expectations '*can be seen as realistic reflection of the children's poor prospects rather than a cause of them*' (p.29). Francis appears to hold the view that because looked-after children have a long history of failure those professionals who acknowledge this and therefore hold 'realistically' low expectations of the group play no part in the outcomes. This position can be strongly challenged by citing decades of psychological evidence that

testifies to the power of expectations on outcomes (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968, Jussim et al 2015, Ferguson, 1997) and specifically where this involves black (Andrews et al, 1997) and poor (Campbell 2015) pupils. Indeed, it has been argued that teachers' assumptions influence their practice and where they hold low expectations this then results in them not pushing and supporting the group involved (Brooks and Goldstein, 2008).

The school inspectorate, Ofsted, in describing what an outstanding teacher looks like, states that 'all teachers [must] have consistently high expectations of all pupils' (Ofsted, 2015). This criterion rests on a similar body of research that argues that teacher expectations, beliefs and assumptions about pupils' have an impact on pupil-teacher interactions, and is conveyed in numerous subtle and not so subtle ways which affects motivation and attainment. Young people themselves agree that low expectations undermine their confidence and self-esteem (Martin and Jackson, 2002).

Reflective summary

I was aware that educational statistics for LAC would be poor – and that when you isolate the figures for black and dual heritage LAC this would also be 'shockingly' poor. I was not prepared however to learn that these statistics have remained so stubbornly poor for decades despite this group being a priority group and initiatives such as the designated teacher and virtual headteacher both of which have made little difference to outcomes. Another stubborn statistic is the high level of exclusions – particularly for black LAC pupils. It is well known through research that a reason for this is racism in schools, the surprise is that the system has finally grudgingly conceded this, as it is only through recognising a problem that it can be tackled. Having said that, I am not convinced that action will follow and indeed it has not. Statistics on schooling for black LAC remain depressing and confirm the degree to which the odds are stacked against this group. Teacher expectation is a significant part of the problem, as well as their lack of skills in working with this vulnerable group. The concepts of stigma, labelling and negative expectations also combine to present formidable challenges to addressing these problems at the school level. Should LAC be treated as having special

2.6.3: Social Capital

Social capital, when taken to mean '*contacts and group memberships which, through the accumulation of exchanges, obligations and shared identities, provide actual or potential support and access to valued resources*' (Bourdieu 1993: 143) might help explain why LAC have such poor experiences in school, it also impacts racial and ethnic identity development.

The lack of social capital holds implications for black and dual heritage looked after young people. Frequent placement moves, lack of contact with birth family and hence a lack of racial and ethnic socialisation can have a cumulative impact on the experiences of young people in care as well as on care leavers. Barn (2009) argues that '*these factors can result not only in negative outcomes in terms of poor educational attainment, unemployment, homelessness/poor housing, criminal activity, substance misuse, and young parenthood, but may also lead to low self-esteem, low levels of confidence, a lack of belongingness, and feelings of isolation and marginalisation.*' (p.16).

The relationship developed at school with teachers and peers is seen as crucial to the development of social capital (Holland, 2008). But where school experience is marked by exclusion, low teacher expectation and insensitivity the opportunity for black and dual heritage young people to develop social capital is poor. A study by Gayle and McClung, (2014) exploring social capital and children looked after report that:

'*80 per cent of looked after children in our study were excluded at least once, compared to less than one per cent in the general school population.*

Moreover, looked after children said teachers expected less of them – 23 per cent of the children in our study reported that teachers expected less of them because they were looked after, while 20 per cent reported being treated different by other children at their school'. (p5)

On the other hand, disadvantaged young people may find other (mal) adaptive ways of developing social capital on their terms. For Bullen and Kenway (2005) this is the case in their research which studied a group of marginalised women in Australia through their educational experiences and found that while the forms of capital that the women developed could be seen to outsiders as 'deficient' or 'deviant' that:

'*…the cultural, social and symbolic capitals they deploy have currency within their social groupings, providing resources and strategies for survival in the classroom and the schoolyard, indeed, for surviving the positional suffering they experience there'* (2005: 52).

The point being that their behaviour has sub-cultural value in that it displays certain social strategies and so accrues symbolic social capital in terms of prestige and a sense of belonging and solidarity (Holland, 2008). This analysis when transferred to other disadvantaged groups suggests that the group can have a form of social capital that they can use to take control of their situation even though it may have a cost attached in terms of sanctions applied by those in authority.

Holland (2008) in her study found that for the black Caribbean young people that their families and communities offered strong social capital ties, contributing to the development of their ethnic identity. She found that the young people regarded black neighbourhoods as a resource for politics, collective mobilisation and for reaffirming their ethnic identity. The practice implications are clear: social workers must strive to connect black and dual heritage young people to their families through facilitating regular contact or placing them with relatives where they can; they must strive to keep them in communities with which they are familiar and where their ethnic background or 'mixedness' is reflected, and they must reduce the disruptive upheaval of frequent placement moves, especially those that mean a change in school.

SECTION 2

PRACTICE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS AND PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTIONS

2.7: Introduction

This section reviews the literature pertaining to the role of the social worker, the professional interventions used; the social policy context within which they operate and how far this can be linked to the failings in the system to adequately meet the needs of black and dual heritage LAC. It will consider the assessment frameworks utilised by social workers when working with LAC. This section is included to further explore and critically examine the literature on system responses, social work practice frameworks, policies and professional interventions when working with looked-after young people. Together sections one and two will expose gaps and reveal contradictions in policy and practice in the way black and dual heritage LAC remain invisible in the dominant discourse in this area.

The challenge for social workers working with black and dual heritage looked after children and young people is how best to meet their needs arising from the reason they entered care whilst also meeting needs arising from their cultural background. This is not only good practice but a legal requirement under the Children Act 1989 (Section 22). Existing empirical research on practice and policy reveals a paucity of studies examining professional responses in meeting the needs of black and dual heritage LAC young people from a critical perspective. Although small, this literature cautions against colour-blindness and institutionally racist practices (Dogra, et al 2002, Sinclair and Hai 2003). Smaje (1995) long ago identified different forms of racism that affect service provision: these included treating people less favorably and stereotyping; assuming that equality in service delivery for everyone will ensure all groups' in society will get their needs met (essentially a colour-blind approach), and

the failure to consider minority groups needs when planning services: '*The evidence reviewed also suggested that those agencies who responded by saying 'we treat everyone the same' have either not considered the needs of the black communities or have taken a decision to ignore them.*' (SSI, 1998). Thankfully, a colourblind approach in social work has long been rejected. Yet evidence in this review attests to the continuation of this approach both in policy and practice. This is illustrated by a recent quote from an influential politician:

'*It is outrageous to deny a child the chance of adoption because of a misguided belief that race is more important than any other factor. And it is simply disgraceful that a black child is three times less likely to be adopted from care than a white child ... I promise you I will not look away when the futures of black children in care continue to be damaged.*' (Gove, in Pemberton, 2012)

Allain (2007) explored the extent to which social workers met the cultural needs of black and minority ethnic looked-after young people aged between 11 and 16. These needs were identified as compatibility in placement with regards to religion, culture, language and race (CA1989 S.22.5c). She interviewed eight social workers from one local authority (6 from a BME background 2 white) and identified four key themes: the use of legislation to support good practice; tensions around negotiating professional and service user differences (high caseloads compounded by lack of knowledge of cultural differences between ethnicities and not grasping complexities in placing dual-heritage young people); the importance of direct work (with both foster carers and young people); and finally of culture as a dynamic concept (most workers stressed the differences between adolescents and the importance of understanding this complex developmental stage).

A key issue that emerged was the importance of direct work with foster carers and young people and the time needed to build trust and develop relationships. The study found that working with people different from themselves raised anxiety about making mistakes in social workers. The author says that social workers in the past had failed to understand and respond to the subtleties of culture due to the overwhelming focus on 'race', resulting in children placed with carers who shared similar

experiences of racism but who had a different cultural experience and tradition. This is an important finding and raises the issue of culture and ethnicity in racial matching, which is often subsumed in policy documents under discussions based on skin colour and simplistic binaries of black/white. Workers told Allain (2007) that big case loads were a threat to good culturally aware social work as it meant workers cut corners and they could not do in-depth work. It also meant that children's voices were drowned out for reasons of expediency. One social worker said:

' a young person leaving care…mixed race… asked me why none of her social workers listened to her about what she wanted…kept telling her she was in denial about being black…placed with Asian family after another…placements kept breaking down…she kept running away…told me that although she was half Asian she was brought up mainly by her white mum…The girl, who we kept placing with Asian foster carers, told me that we literally drove her crazy…by telling her she was in denial about being black'. p.135

The quote hints at a number of practice pointers for workers. These include listening to young people first and foremost, followed by developing a knowledge and understanding of the complexities of working in a multiracial society with black and dual heritage young people. The young person's emotional wellbeing was unlikely to have been promoted in the above scenario. We know that finding suitable placement matches for dual heritage looked after young people presents children's services with a dilemma (Barn, 2001) and that the search can result in these young people experiencing a series of short-term placements (Thorburn, 2000). Owusu-Bempah and Howitt (2000) argue that practitioners holding the view that dual heritage young people are confused and need to identify as black are racist. Where social workers seek to influence LAC to identify as black they deny them their right to self-identify based on their self-concept which can lead to heightened sensitivity, feelings of isolation and loss of orientation (Owusu-Bempah, 2002). Okitikpi, (2005) agrees that welfare professionals holding this view are likely to cause emotional and psychological damage. This practice has been labelled as another attempt to deny mixed race children the right to self-definition (Owusu-Bempah, 2005). Practitioners are urged to counteract the pressure for mixed race children to identify as black and in

so doing challenge the concept of race in its biological meaning and the perpetuation of the racist 'one-drop' rule. Practitioners need to change their attitudes to give these young people the right that others enjoy which is to self-identify.

Moreover, errors arising from mistakes as a result of incorrect cultural assumptions can have fatal consequences. This was evident in the Victoria Climbié case where the Caribbean worker misinterpreted Victoria's standing to attention as an African trait signifying respect when in fact Victoria was terrified (Laming, 2003). The death of Tyra Henry (Whose Child, 1987) was in part attributed to a lack of support provided by social workers on the grounds of racial stereotyping. A fear of getting it wrong or causing offence can also have tragic consequences as illustrated in the case of Sukina Hammond, a mixed-race girl killed by her father. The social workers were identified in the serious case report as overcompensating for fear of being accused of racism (The Bridge Child Care Consultancy, 1991). The overrepresentation of black and dual heritage children in the looked after numbers in itself suggests that the system is institutionally racist as evidence shows that black children are fast tracked into care more quickly than white children (Barn, 1993), and that preventative work is not provided for black families to the same degree as white families (Ibid).

Social policy contributes to this state of affairs by recommending that all local authorities make sure that they provide services that recognise the diverse ethnic and cultural needs of all children (DfES, 2007). Thus it is down to each local authority and each social worker to deliver services that meets the specific needs of all individual children. This is problematic because of the lack of reliable information available regarding the specific needs of certain groups in care.

At the same time it is important not to single out black and dual heritage children and young people to the extent that they become pathologised (Dominelli, 2002). Dogra (2005) argues for a model of cultural sensibility that leaves practitioners open to reflecting and changing in response to other perspectives rather than attempting to acquire expertise about other cultures (p.235). The strength in this approach is that it connects anti-oppressive practice with reflective practice. Support for this proposal comes from Owusu-Bempah (2008, in Davies, 2008) when he compares the demands put on a worker of needing to know something about all cultures to a worker needing

to understand the different languages spoken in their area – which can run into the hundreds in many boroughs.

2.8: Social Work Practice Assessment Frameworks

There is no standard definition for the term 'assessment framework' (Crisp et al, 2007) but it is commonly understood to mean provision of guidance regarding the dimensions that should be considered when assessing a family. Such frameworks are really only aide-memoires, or 'organising principles' (Macdonald, 2001, pp. 238-9) for effective practice.

Most social workers in England are now trained in accordance with Professional Capability Framework (TCSW, 2012). This framework contains a set of capabilities built around nine domains of practice, which outline what practitioners should know and be able to do in practice at different stages in their career; it starts from beginning social work training to achieving strategic social work practice. However, it is a generic framework applicable to all service user groups with very little guidance to LAC. In an attempt to rectify this TCSW (2014) published additional statements to their original framework in fostering and adoption; these apply to qualified and registered social workers - who have passed their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) who have responsibility for children in family placements. Under the domain of 'diversity' the expectation is that social workers:

'*Recognise and respect the complex issues arising from identity and the diversity of experience of children and prospective foster carers and adopters. They take account of the significance of diversity and discrimination in the history of many fostered and adopted children and are able to consider the impact on children of living with families that may be very different from their birth family. They are able to recognise discrimination and challenge colleagues (foster carers and adopters) and senior staff.* (TCSW, 2014, p.6)

The introduction of new fast track pathways to social work training are seen as strengthening the quality of the profession in dealing with complex issues through attracting high achieving graduates to social work training. 'Step-Up' to social work and 'Frontline' represent two initiatives that enable trainees to work towards a qualification at the same time as gaining practical experience. However, an evaluation of step-up revealed a racial disparity in places offered. For example, none of the 132 black African applicants to step-up progressed beyond the assessment centre stage (DfES, 2013) (evaluation of Frontline is ongoing). And fewer offers of places on these routes went to Black Caribbeans, Africans and Asians as compared to white applicants (Ibid, p84). This is in contrast to these groups' overrepresentation as graduates from the social work degree in comparison with their numbers in the general population (Skills for Care, 2015). LAC's stated preference for similar workers in terms of ethnic background will not be best served with such built in disparities.

The role of the social worker extends beyond completing the foster carer's assessment report but also includes exploring how they and others in the home intend to manage issues of '*racial challenge, identity issues and/or rejection by the young person of their black identity, ethnic heritage or religious affiliation*' (The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations). Also, social workers are tasked with assessing how the carers intend to help young people be aware of their origins, past and significant events, and people in their lives. Whether this is enough input from the social worker (aided by the fostering panel) to select families with the right mix of skills, resilience and knowledge to look after some of the most damaged and vulnerable young people in society has been described as '*an extremely pertinent area requiring further research*' (Morgan and Barron, 2011 p30).

It is at the advanced level of the PCF that workers are expected to know about the criticality of maintaining links with birth families and value and take note of service user's voice. It is questionable how many workers are aware of these standards. TCSW says at the post qualifying stage they should be used to inform CPD but different local authorities put different emphases on CPD so some practitioners will be challenged to demonstrate continuous learning using the PCF while others will not.

The only requirement on social workers to continue their development is through being a registrant with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). In order to maintain their registration registrants have to keep an up to date record of their CPD activities, which must be relevant to practice and have contributed to enhancing the quality of their practice. This must benefit the service user. But not all social workers will be audited; in fact currently only 2.5% of the whole profession will be subject to a random check every two years, hence the chances of being selected to prove CPD is low.

Reflection Summary

As a social work academic it is disappointing to see the professional body and the regulator positioned at odds one with the other. The interface between the HCPC and TCSW is a fraught with misunderstandings: I speak as one who was tasked with mapping their various standards and capabilities against a social work curriculum. The interface of both did not sit well together and although TCSW Professional Capability Framework is not mandatory it is backed by the social work reform board as effectively implementing that board's work and so programmes that choose not to be endorsed run the risk as being seen as not fit for purpose. Unsurprisingly, TCSW have recently been abolished (Spring 2015), as it was left by Government to raise most of its own costs through member subscriptions. This was always going to be challenging as The College was in competition with the British Association of Social Work (BASW) who also operate a member subscription service and the HCPC, which levies a fee from practising social workers in order to be registered as a social worker and use the title. The lack of political support for TCSW is interesting and might be interpreted as confirming a lack of support for the social work profession itself. Given that the closure of TCSW coincides with the rise of the new fast-track Government backed routes into social work training, this might be viewed as a further attempt to gain control of the profession. The fear is that the lack of attention paid to anti-oppressive practice in the curriculum of Frontline in particular replicates the recruitment biases for these programmes disadvantaging both black and minority ethnic social workers and black and minority ethnic service users.

In addition to the above framework social workers have to use the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (Department of Health et al, 2000). Like the PCF this comprises of domains and dimensions that guide assessment. However, a danger in its use is that practitioners may see these categories as rigid and not consider information that doesn't fit neatly into a particular category.

'The Guidance is not a practice manual. It does not set out step-by-step procedures to be followed: rather it sets out a framework, which should be adapted and used to suit individual circumstances' (Department of Health et al, 2000, p9).

But as Richards (2000) notes, assessment frameworks invariably get in the way of the development of a relationship between, in this regard, the assessor and the LAC. More than that it can be used defensively to ward off criticism in the event of a child death. Howe (1992) observes that child abuse and child deaths create an imperative for procedures and guidelines for defensive practice, more concerned with procedures than people. Once the policy makers and managers have written the rules and established the routines, all that the wary social worker and her supervisor have to do if blame is to be avoided is to 'go by the book' (Howe, 1992, p. 507).

Social workers normally work with LAC as part of a diverse caseload except those in specialist leaving care teams who may work exclusively with LAC and have a key role in delivering services and improving outcomes for LAC. They have a lead role in assessing needs and ensuring that young people's health and wellbeing needs are met and when done well their efforts can literally transform lives (NCB, 2006, Munro, 2001). The DfE has identified raising the quality of social workers as its biggest single objective (HC 809, 2015). It will do this in a number of ways: enforcing its own statutory guidance; ensuring local authorities judged to be in need of improvement do so quickly; reforming the system of Serious Case Reviews; introducing new regulations enabling local authorities to delegate some of their work to private or voluntary organisations on a not for profit basis; and through attracting high quality graduates through two new social work training schemes (DfE, 2015).

During their interventions social workers can draw upon a range of practice theories and methods, the key one of which may be Attachment theory. This provides a theoretical base for interventions and informs decision-making and planning in accordance with the best interests of vulnerable children. The Care Matters White Paper (2007) stated that it is essential that professionals involved in supporting children and carers have a strong understanding of attachment theory so they may help a vulnerable child develop a secure emotional base (p18). This is seen as essential to building resilience.

Social learning theory offers another theoretical approach that is compatible with attachment theory by placing an emphasis on carers needing to be sensitively attuned to the child in order to shape the child's behaviour. Social learning principles, such as positive reinforcement and limit setting, have behavioural consequences and can be taught to the carer. Behavioural interventions have been criticised for ignoring feelings and motivations that might lie underneath behaviour, so adopting interventions that help workers and carers to understand these and work on ways of developing the relationship may be more fruitful than focusing on the children's behaviour alone. Pearce and Pezzot-Pearce (2001) recommend using a mixed approach, stating that interventions that are directed solely at the child are unhelpful. This was something that Luke et al (2014) were aware of '*Attachment and social learning theories may not offer the whole package for the full range of looked after children's problems: for example, children with complex issues like PTSD may require additional approaches in the form of psychotherapeutic interventions that tackle their internal world of feelings and beliefs. Practitioners should, therefore, adopt the approach (or combination of approaches) that is most appropriate to an individual child's needs, rather than adopting a blanket theoretical approach for all looked after children.*'(p120).

Barth et al (2005) recommend making foster carers aware of alternative theoretical explanations for children's behaviour. Evidence exists (Cameron and Maginn, 2009), that children in care do best with 'authoritative parenting', this is where carers set clear expectations on behaviour; are encouraging, firm and warm, and also show affection and commitment to their foster children while being sensitive to their needs.

Life story work is popular with LAC children and young people as it helps them to connect with their birth family through working with a trusted adult to create a record of their experiences (Blueprint Project, 2005, Gaskell, 2010). It can be used to work through emotions; explore identity; and improve relationships. It is a technique that can be used by all social workers with all client groups including people with dementia and there is good evidence for its effectiveness (Haight et al, 2006).

Using theories for intervention is dependent on working with the young people and carers as partners. Partnership working is consistent with Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) as it entails giving users a voice at every stage of intervention from defining needs and problems and agreeing how best to meet these needs through to planning, reviewing and evaluating the intervention. Thompson, (2008, in Davies, 2008) states that there is a direct parallel between learning how to deal with emotional issues and learning how to deal with discrimination and oppression (p.106). Both require skills on the part of the worker as well as requiring workers to look critically at their own responses and attitudes and values.

2.9 Quality of relationship between social worker and Looked After Children

Munro (2001, p.131) reported that her sample of LAC regarded the social worker as a very powerful person in their lives and when this relationship was good the social worker could be a strong ally for them. The respondents were also reported as mostly complaining about the high turnover of staff and lack of social worker reliability, which was internalised and interpreted as a sign of their low status. Munro's (ibid) sample all remembered at least one worker who made them feel well cared for and supported. One study (Flemming et al, 2005) found that young people valued the role of social workers in helping to discuss intimate private health matters such as sex and contraception. Recent policy initiatives seem to be acting on this evidence in recognising that for LAC, having a positive and sustained personal relationship with their social worker promotes their emotional well-being (DfE 2007). Quality social work to LAC include the worker 'making things happen' 'taking time to get to know them' and 'fighting their corner' (McLeod, 2010, Stanley, 2007). Young people

wanted to feel valued by their social workers and respected as individuals (McCleod, 2010). LAC told researchers they want their workers to be a 'friend' to them and this was linked to core values underlying social work practice such as respect and empowerment (GSCC, 2008). However, they still require more emotional support than is available currently (Sinclair et al 2003). It seems likely that young people still require more emotional support than Sinclair (Ibid) found was available.

Quality work, or the lack of, was raised as far back as 1993 by Barn (1993) who found that '*black families and children underwent a qualitatively different and inferior experience in their dealings with the social services*' (p9). This and subsequent research on care-leavers identified that the self-esteem and confidence of children from black and minority ethnic communities was undermined by cultural insensitivity by those around them (Barn et al, 2005). Social workers have also been criticised for unprofessionalism and a lack of respect through being unreliable and breaching confidentiality which young people interpreted as a sign of their low priority in the social worker's life (Munro, 2001). Twenty years have passed since research first revealed that LAC wanted more emotional empathic interaction with their social workers but many were disappointed since what they received was an 'almost technical', 'robotic' professional intervention in their lives' devoid of emotion and feeling (Butler and Williamson 1994 p84, in Munro, 2001). Children's well-being is closely linked to their relationships and emotions. This implies that services should not only focus more on these intangibles, but also enable staff to provide opportunities for young people to repair their damaged emotional development through stable meaningful trustworthy relationships (Holmes, 2001) and through using the relationships they have with young people positively (Jordan, 2006, p. 48).

Getting close to another human being where one is a 'professional worker' and another a 'service user' raises issues of ethics and boundaries. '*social workers cannot be the child's friend but for children to benefit, professionals have to provide some of the qualities that a friendship provides*' (Blueprint Project, 2004, p. 46). Young people reported wanting more than a friendship with their key professional but wanted to feel loved. They also wanted more equal relationships with social workers which is interpreted as them wanting workers to share something personal of themselves. This sharing is based on a belief in reciprocity, or fairness, which is

closely related to the recurring theme of 'equity' (McCleod 2008, GSCC, 2008). Sharing can also be interpreted in a cultural way. For example, Prevatt Goldstein (2002) reported that black social workers in her study overwhelmingly wanted to use their political experience of being black to ensure that black LAC received equality of opportunity (p771).

Some authors have made recommendations for policy and practice as a direct consequence of the findings regarding love and emotional well-being. Luke and Coyne (2008) for example, recommend that carers show explicit and consistent displays of affection. They argued that if foster parents offered consistent messages of love and support, the child will begin to internalize a more positive self-concept which may help reshape their working model of the self as a person who is worthy of the love offered to them (Luke and Coyne 2008). One young person summed up their feelings thus: *There was a lot of physical affection, which was ideal for an 11 year old kid, it was good to have a hug, and good for them to say 'I love you, we're proud of you.' . . . It was good to be told that you were loved, cause obviously, being in foster care, at times it's quite lonely . . . It was good to feel the love in different ways* (Luke and Coyne 2008).

This is something that is a feature of a number of other studies. For example, Chase (et al, 2006) emphasised the need for professionals to facilitate opportunities for LAC to develop meaningful and consistent relationships with substitute carers and/or professionals as being vital for their emotional well-being. '*I was lonely. I was fed up of moving around all the time. I just wanted to be loved by someone* (Chase et al 2006). Chase (et al, ibid) revealed how a lack of 'love' was cited as the reason for early pregnancy by many of his respondents. He found that the young women involved quickly accepted unplanned pregnancy, and many reflected back on their feelings of abandonment and lack of attachments as the rationale for accepting and continuing with the pregnancy. Aside from establishing a link between meeting young women's need for an emotional relationship and their choices around pregnancy and parenthood, these findings also connect to the literature on attachment and identity. The absence of at least one attachment figure in their lives might rationally explain teenage pregnancy amongst the looked after population. Hence for practitioners '*finding ways to respond adequately to the long-term emotional needs of children and*

young people who are looked after would appear to be central to providing them with alternatives to early parenthood as a life choice' (Chase et al 2006). This complements Flemming et al (2005) who found that young people valued the role of social workers in discussing intimate issues to do with sex, pregnancy and their sexual health.

One notion for practice being put forward is that of 'authentically warm' caring (improving the parenting experiences and the emotional support of children while they are in care). This is seen as not only enhancing the well-being of LAC, but can also lead to improvements in personal, social, academic and economic outcomes. In short, the challenge for social work is to provide the quality of care and support that is to be found in the most functional of families (Cameron and Maginn, 2008).

2.10: Relationships Between Foster Carers, Social Workers and LAC

Foster carers are responsible for the day-to-day care of children and young people placed with them. Recruiting sufficient quality foster carers to meet the needs of their LAC population is an ever-present challenge to local authorities in the face of foster carer shortages (The Fostering Network, 2015). Research has confirmed that rather than the child's history of behaviour predicting placement breakdown or poor outcomes that instead it is more the quality of the foster carers that was more decisive (Sinclair et al, 2004). This is significant as it underlines the message that in meeting the emotional wellbeing of LAC that where children are labelled 'hard to place' and who may have behavioural issues, that these can be successfully worked through given the recruitment of high quality carers who are supported by an effective system of support.

Conversely, a lack of support has been shown to be a major factor in terms of foster carer retention (Sinclair et al, 2004). Yet, Selwyn, Saunders and Farmer (2010) reported high levels of placement instability despite foster carers reporting high levels of satisfaction with the support they received. The authors however, fail to speculate as to why this might be. One form of support for foster carers is regular training. It

has been said that training has the potential to positively impact on LAC's outcomes and reduce placement breakdown (Everson-Hock et al. 2011). However, results from the few studies that have examined the effectiveness of training programmes have reported poor outcomes. MacDonald and Turner, (2005) report that while carers say they find training offered to them useful the training appears to have no effect on placement stability or the carers' ability to 'cope', or outcomes for the young person. It may be that in relying on carers' subjective opinions rather than a specific measure or a longitudinal design meant longer term benefits might have been missed. But given the above evidence, the relationship between training for foster carers and outcomes remains unclear.

An additional form of support is through the supervising social worker. The expectation of the role of the supervisory social worker is set out in Standard 21 of the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (DfE, 2011) '*It is the Supervisory Social Workers' role to supervise the foster carer's work, to ensure that they are meeting the child's needs, and to offer support and a framework to assess the foster carer's performance and develop their skills*' (HM Government, 2011, p.51). Research confirms that foster carers value the support they receive from their supervisory social worker (Sinclair, 2005), which has a bearing on recruitment and retention of foster carers. There is also evidence that foster carers from the independent fostering services felt more valued than foster carers employed by local authorities (Kirton, Beecham and Ogilvie, 2007). As to whether that satisfaction has a relationship to the stability of the placement and outcomes for the fostered child is uncertain (Sinclair, 2005). Foster carers say they want their supervisory social worker to respect them, to be professional and efficient in dealing with problems, to listen to them, and work in partnership (Sinclair et al, 2004). Some studies have found that foster carers feel they have a better working relationship with their supervisory social worker than their fostered child's social worker (Kirton et al, 2007). A poll conducted on 100 registered foster carers and 70 practising social workers (Community Care, 2012) found that 71% of foster carers described their relationship with their supervising social work as excellent or good, while 88% reported problems with their relationship with their foster child's social worker – with almost 66% of children's social workers saying the same. In a study by Wade et al (2012) they found black and

Asian foster carers to be more uncertain about the supervisory social worker role more so than white foster carers (p.277).

The relationships between key adults around the child are key to the outcomes achieved. The child's social worker is the other social worker with whom foster carers work closely and whose role it is to ensure that the best interest of the child remains paramount. There is not much literature on the relationship between the child's social worker and the supervising social worker and how this may impact on placement stability and outcomes. Similarly, the impact that ethnic background might play in these relationships and understandings was missing, although some studies reported black carers feeling less supported by the supervising social worker (see e.g., Wade et al, 2012, and, in the USA context, Okeke, 2003).

Training was identified as a form of support for foster carers and Pithouse, Hill-Tout and Lowe (2002) explored a cognitive-behavioural based programme that aimed to train carers in how to manage children's challenging behaviours. They interviewed 53 foster carers pre and post training. The findings indicated that foster carers reported finding the training useful but the programme appeared to have little impact on their care giving abilities or on the children's behaviours. Furthermore, it could be argued that behavioural-based training programmes run the risk of missing underlying psychological/emotional reasons for the behaviour. Foster carers on the whole welcome the support that training can offer them as they have reported how trying to manage difficult behaviour can lead to a sense of insecurity and inadequacy (Ironside, 2004). Research confirms that foster carers struggle to manage challenging behaviour from their foster children and often report feeling helpless and isolated just before the placement breaks down (Hill-Tout, Pithouse and Lowe, 2003; Herbert and Wookey, 2007). Placement breakdowns can affect mental well-being and increase carer vulnerability to developing additional problems in the future (McCarthy, 2004).

A study by Sinclair et al (2001) found that the placement break down rate for black and minority ethnic children was lower than for white children regardless of whether the placement was with carers from the child's own ethnic background or not. In support Thoburn et al (2005) reported studies that found no difference in the rate of break down between children from a black and ethnic minority background and white

children, although the break down rates for children of mixed parentage were higher than for white children. These and other studies did not find significant differences in placement break down between children placed with carers from a similar background to their own and those placed with white families.

Turning to the quality of parenting offered by foster carers, Schofield (2010) states that in her experience the quality of the regular parenting role '*often falls between the responsibility of the foster carer supervising social worker (who works with the carer but does not see it as their role to monitor child development) and that of the child's social worker (who reviews the child's progress but would often not see it as their role to counsel the foster carer on how to develop strategies for parenting the child).*' This lack of partnership working might usefully be addressed through practice guidance from policy makers and joint training.

Schofield (2010) further reports that the core qualities needed by foster carers to provide care for troubled children are sensitivity and availability (physical and emotional) as these promote secure attachments. Schofield and Beek (2005) (influenced by Ainsworth et al, 1971) developed five attachment categories.

- Availability- helping children to trust
- Sensitivity- helping children to manage their feelings and behaviour
- Acceptance- building children's self-esteem
- Co-operation- helping children to feel effective
- Family membership- helping children to belong

(Schofield, 2010, p3)

These dimensions interact and offer foster carer and social workers a framework for conceptualising what effective parenting looks like. The author states that this 'secure base' model has been recommended in Every Child Matters (DfES, 2007) as a basis for foster carer training and support, which has been taken up by a number of local authorities and internationally. Reflecting on the framework, family membership and availability stand out as particularly significant components, because where a LAC genuinely feel like they belong in a substitute family which is available to them

emotionally, this would promote stability and secure attachments and act against placement breakdown and have a positive effect across the child development domains.

Foster carers are recruited both by Independent Fostering Providers (IFP) and local authorities. There are currently shortages of registered foster carers (The Fostering Network, 2015) particularly for older children, those with emotional and behavioural problems and those from ethnic minorities. The proportions of minority ethnic foster carers availability varies, in that black carers are underrepresented in the foster care population (McDermid et al, 2012) but overrepresented compared to the adult black population (8% vs. 3%) Ofsted (2011). This however masks regional variations and ethnic differences in those described as black. The literature suggests that targeting BME communities using members of that community to attract carers may be beneficial to address the shortage in some areas (Wilson, et al 2007). There are also calls for more research and analysis as to the motivations and barriers to fostering for BME families and communities, the knowledge of which might then inform recruitment strategies (McDermid et al, 2012).

Once recruited, foster carers are prepared for the role by learning about the needs of children and are visited by a social worker who prepares a report on them that is submitted to a fostering panel for approval. Since 2008 every foster carer in England has had to undertake pre and post approval training based on the Training, Support and Development (TSD) standards developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) (DfE, 2012). These standards sets out what foster carers should know, understand and be able to do within the first twelve months after being approved.

Local authorities fostering services are assessed against the National Minimum Standards (NMS) in Fostering issued by Ofsted (DfE, 2011) which takes them into account when inspecting fostering services. Ofsted's purpose is to assess the quality of care being provided. However, a recent Ofsted report showed that 70% of local authorities inspected (children's homes fostering services and local adoption agencies) are 'struggling' to provide a good service (Ofsted, Annual Social Care Report 2013-14). I would also argue that Ofsted should be instructed to inspect how

well a local authority is doing in relation to meeting the specific needs of black and dual heritage LAC. The DfE has the power to enact this as the framework against which Ofsted inspects is underpinned by regulations and standards set by the DfE and they themselves have said that Ofsted reports are the best way to hold local authorities to account (HC 809, p8). The DfE however, appears reluctant to accept that it is best placed to analyse the data it receives and use it to help local authorities improve service delivery (HC 809, p8).

2.11: School System Responses

Schools, of course, are only one part of a system tasked with supporting LAC as part of a corporate parent role for the local authority. Educational system responses to poor school performance have largely failed despite the raft of policy and guidance issued over the past two decades (Coman and Devaney, 2011). These initiatives include the creation of a statutory Designated Teacher (DT) in every school to promote the educational achievement of LAC (Department for Children Schools and Family 2009a) and the creation of the Virtual headteacher (VH) (DfES 2006). DTs are responsible for developing LAC Personal Education Plans (PEPs) that set targets for LAC pupils. Virtual headteachers are supposed to facilitate networks between schools, DTs, social workers and foster carers (Department for Education and Skills 2006) and were considered to be playing an important role in improving LAC educational achievements (Office for the Standards of Education in Schools 2012). Both initiatives have statutory status, but in research evaluating the DT role, looked after young people were not enthusiastic about having a special person tasked with promoting their educational needs, as this singled them out for being in care (Driscoll, 2011). Similarly, many DTs themselves were unimpressed by the PEPs they were responsible for developing and regarded them as a paper filling exercise (Hayden, 2005).

Focussing attention on raising the educational attainment of LAC has been seen to mask the real problem of school failure for this vulnerable group, which is their emotional wellbeing (Cameron and Maginn, 2011). Such studies ignore the real problem, the relationship between the emotional aspects of being in care and its

impact on educational experience and attainment (Gilligan 2000). There is a view that `*it is not necessary for the child [in care] to recover emotionally before attending to [their] educational needs'* (Aldgate, 1990 p.48) which is disputed by research eliciting the views of LAC themselves. Feeling as if no one understood them made these young people feel isolated, unable to concentrate, alone and unprepared to learn (Gallagher and Green 2012). This builds the case for the emotional needs of young people within schools to be given as much prominence as their academic learning needs. Addressing the two goes hand in hand: when emotional needs are supported the child's learning needs are more easily met (Geddes 2006; Bomber 2011)

Wilson et al. (2011) suggest that school related factors affect differences in attainment by ethnicity through education policies on curriculum content. Tomlinson (2005), for example, argues that the school curriculum is ethnocentric, nationalistic and colour-blind and exacerbates racial inequalities. It also ignores black children's cultural and racial needs. In support, Muir and Smithers (2004 p.1) argue that failure of school systems and individuals within it to positively engage with black students has disadvantaged them and contributed to their lack of attainment. The Social Exclusion Unit (2003) identified 5 key reasons why LAC underachieve in education: instability, too much time out of school, insufficient support and encouragement, insufficient help with their education when they fall behind and insufficient help and support with their emotional wellbeing (p4).

Looking more closely at in-school interactions between teachers and pupils Phillips (2011) argues that it is the interaction of different levels of events that is to blame for unequal outcomes in attainment. Micro-level aggressions by teachers (informed by low expectations and stereotypes) framed by Macro-level state policies which force schools to compete with each other results in selective targeting (and rejecting) of some pupils over others. Phillips (ibid) sees this as a 'rational' response by schools and teachers (p. 185) to these political pressures. In this he may be correct. The pupils who are dispensable become those who are also most vulnerable, pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN), traveller children, black children and children in care. These groups are 'resource heavy' and are without a track record of high attainment, consequently, in a competitive education market, they become dispensable.

2.12: Listening to Young People's Voices

One way of meeting the individual and group needs of different children is to listen to them. These views are meant to be at the centre of care planning and decision-making processes as reflected in UK policy:

'…we are determined to put the voice of the child in care at the centre both of our reforms and of day-to-day practice. It is only by listening to these children that we can understand their concerns and know whether or not we are meeting their needs.'

(DfES, 2006)

This imperative to listen to children's voices about the services they receive has been growing in recent years. The principle of including children's views in the design and delivery of services was formally established in 1989 through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ratified by the UK in 1991 (United Nations, 1989). As well as the UN Convention 1989, The Children Act 1989 lays duties on all to ensure user participation. Hence the courts also have to have regard to the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child. Section 22, 5 (c) of the CA1989 also requires that due consideration be given to a child's race, culture, religion and language when making decisions about them. So important was this principle considered that not only was it included in statutory legislation above but pronouncements continued to be made centrally: '*Only by setting more store by children's satisfaction with their care will we get closer to finding out how cared about they really feel, how stable and secure their lives seem.'*
(Children Schools and Families Committee, 2009. p15)

Despite these good intentions, underpinning legislation and practice guidance young people's ability to influence the nature of the services they receive has been brought into question (Tisdall and Davis, 2004). Ofsted (2010) questioned just over one thousand looked after children and young people about the frequency their opinions were sought and if they felt they were actually listened to and only half felt this was

the case. Similarly, Morgan, (2010) found that between one quarter and one third of those he surveyed did not know that they had a care plan, didn't know what a care plan was and only sixty-nine percent agreed with their care plan's contents. One conclusion from these studies is that professionals are failing to respond to the requirement to listen to the views of this vulnerable group and to make sure that their views are acted upon (Dent and Cameron, 2003). This is despite consistent findings from the literature confirming looked after young people's wishes to be heard and kept informed (Jobe, et al, 2012).

Apart from feeling excluded and isolated, not being consulted on matters that affect them directly can lead to feelings of helplessness and have a significant impact on young people's future abilities to make decisions (Leeson, 2007). Hence, excluding young people from participating in decisions holds both short and long-term consequences for their wellbeing. In addition to wanting to be kept informed young people express clear desires for more contact and positive relationships with their social worker (Farmer et al, 2001; A National Voice, 2002) and for more professional behaviour such as turning up on time for meetings and returning their calls (Gaskell, 2010). LAC children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds also said that they wanted their social workers to show more respect for their culture and ethnic background and make greater efforts to talk to them and understand them rather than resorting to assumptions and stereotypes (A National Voice, 2002).

Studies of the views of looked after children consistently show how much the young people value long term consistent support from carers and social workers who advocate and care for them (NCB, 2006, Munro, 2001). These studies also reported how much young LAC disliked being labelled and stigmatised and being treated as if they were a homogenous group. They told researchers that when they tell others they were in care they risked being pitied, sympathised with or people assuming that they were criminals and troublemakers (Duncalf, 2010, Blueprint Project, 2005). Several studies gaining children's views reported a lack of awareness amongst professionals on these kinds of issues (Harker et al, 2003). Young people wanted a focus on their strengths and achievements rather than reinforcing negativity (Duncalf, 2010). This view accords with that of Owusu-Bempah (2008, p324, in Davis, 2008) when he recommends practice and research into black LAC to focus on identifying those

children who seem to be thriving and determine what factors are associated with their resilience. Similarly, he argues that the system should be examined for factors that enhance functioning and wellbeing as a focus on problems runs the danger of pathologising ethnic minority families (p.324). *'Rather than a choice of services, the young people simply wanted the services that were being delivered to be good enough services that took into account some aspects of their background, context and need'* (Gaskell, 2010 p142).

From these messages a picture of an ideal social worker emerges: They must be accessible, trustworthy and reliable, warm, friendly and offer effective practical and emotional support. They need to reveal a little of themselves, be fair, and respect young people as autonomous individuals (McCleod, 2008). Most of the young people interviewed by McCleod (2008) experienced more than one social worker and interpreted workers leaving as 'abandonment'. Hence, McCleod suggests that the final attribute of an ideal social worker is one who 'doesn't leave'.

2.13: Barriers to Quality Social Work

A barrier against quality work consistent in the literature is staff turnover. High staff turnover presents formidable barriers to developing positive long term relationships with LAC (Gaskell, 2010) and having a positive sustained relationship with a social worker promotes the wellbeing of LAC (McLeod, 2010). If those that leave the service are experienced workers, this then impacts on the quality of services provided, increases the workload of those who remain, and leads to poor outcomes (Laming, 2009). *'Heavy caseloads, burnout, poor pay and conditions, dysfunctional organisations, and low levels of training and support have all been found to explain this exodus... it is how these combine and interact… that result not only in the departure of weaker workers but also committed and excellent practitioners.'* (Baginsky, 2013 p5). Experienced staff leaving not only presents a problem to the employer but to the service users of that staff member, who are asked to invest emotionally in another person. Baginsky (2013) found that high staff turnover also

means that those staff who remain have limited practice experience and are often given too much responsibility for complex cases too early in their careers.

A number of factors are identified in the literature as suggestions for local authorities to retain experienced practitioners. Healey et al (2009) suggest employers review their policies on: workload, pay, working conditions, workplace culture, the quality of supervision provided and the opportunities for continuous professional development. Baginsky (2013) puts forward a number of suggestions for a retention strategy to a senior managers in her study. The managers identified establishing a new career structure tied to the PCF, and acting on the results of exit interviews, as the two steps that were both significant and could be acted upon (p37). Other suggestions that were considered significant but were identified as being difficult to act upon, included reducing and managing caseloads, and creating a learning culture – both of which were recommended by Munro (2011) in her report aimed at increasing the quality of social work services in children's services.

High staff turnover however should not excuse poor professional practice. Young people reported being told about a change of social worker only when the new worker took over (A National Voice, 2002) leading to long-term distress on the part of the young person (Gaskell, 2010). '*You don't get an explanation. Sometimes you don't even see them and you get a letter saying 'I'm sorry I'm not going to be your social worker anymore', and you think hang on, I've never even seen you!*' (Gaskell, 2010 p145). Another young person said: '*It makes you feel neglected when they keep changing'' What's the point in getting to know your new social worker when she will probably be gone soon*?' (p131). In support of this view Crystal, aged 21 in Gaskell's (2010) study said: '*As soon as you were beginning to trust them [social workers] they moved on. Just as you were putting trust in them, if you did put trust in them, they were gone.*'

Gaskell explained one of possible consequences of repeated loss of trust*, 'because this young woman came to expect the sequence of being let down, by her own admission, she blocked the access of care from her social workers and from other care providers. Through time, she stopped placing any trust in her social workers, thus building what she considered to be a reciprocal relationship of mistrust. (p.143).*

Gaskell's (2010) research methodology is similar to McCleod's (2010) and like most researchers in this area both adopt qualitative approaches to data gathering and used similar numbers of young respondents (10 for Gaskell and 11 for McCleod). Five of Gaskell's sample were from black British backgrounds, three were from mixed Black British and White British backgrounds and two young people described their ethnicity as White British. McLeod's entire sample was white British. This may be explained in part by their location as Gaskell's study was located in London, and McCleod's in 'a local authority in the North of England' (p.774). It is interesting to note that for both groups, regardless of background, all of the young people agreed they were not cared for; that their emotional distress was not contained and that their needs not met. They reported feeling not listened to and interpreted this as a failure to care. They also agreed that because they were in care, they were labelled as troublemakers. In this regard, social workers were advised to take a more pro-active approach to helping foster carers engage with LAC to promote emotional well-being, rather than focusing on 'managing difficult behaviour' or only supporting placements when they were at risk of breakdown (Schofield, 2010).

Gaskell, reported that, after many attempts at trying to get their voices heard, many young people in his sample became disillusioned (Gaskell, 2010). However, despite having the majority of participants from black or dual heritage background very little analysis or findings were reported for separate sub-groups. Of note is that despite differences in background both groups shared many similar complaints about the shortcomings of the care system. However, treating both groups essentially as one lost the opportunity to learn whether the mixed group had any additional needs and what these were? The overrepresentation of black and dual heritage LAC in London especially means that researchers seeking a sample for research purposes are likely to receive high numbers of these children in their samples. It is all the more a pity therefore that more researchers do not seek to investigate issues that may pertain specifically to this group so that we can become more knowledgeable about them and their needs.

As well as high staff turnover presenting barriers to quality social work with LAC, social workers themselves have long complained about managerialism and the concomitant lack of time to do quality work with LAC: '*The worst thing about this job is that you don't get enough time to spend with children. The time is taken up with filling in forms, paper-work, and meetings about things that sometimes seem a long way from direct service to children* (Practitioner quoted in Blueprint Project, 2004, p. 2). Howe (1992) argued that the bureaucratisation of social work requires compliance with agency policy rather than good judgement, or therapeutic competence. It could be argued that prioritising procedures in preference to direct work with children has arisen as defence mechanisms against media responses following child deaths that typically seek to ascribe practitioner blame (McCleod, 2010 p728). Munro (2001) observed that while the young people in her research welcomed having the same worker for a long period, the stress on targets, performance indicators and paperwork in government policy had led to a devaluing of casework skills and neglect of direct work with children. A decade later Munro would be asked to lead a review of child protection in England (Munro, 2011). This review described social work practice as 'over-bureaucratised' and 'over prescribed' and recommended changing practice away from one focused on bureaucratic compliance to one focused on relationships and learning where the priority was on quality social work and forming relationships with people.

Not all young people are happy with their social workers. Young people in one study (McCleod, 2008) reported feeling alienated by their social workers' perceived social class and said that they preferred workers from a background closer to their own. One young person said she found it easier to relate to her leaving care worker (a young woman formerly in the care system herself) than to her social worker because '*I think she knows what you're going through'*. This desire for matched carers echoes findings from SCIE (Fostering Guide, 7, 2004), which notes that black carers are often well placed to empathise with black birth parents' difficulties and to help black foster children to develop a sense of pride and achievement. A study by Duncalf (2010) reported young people expressing a wish to have role models from similar ethnic backgrounds to themselves. The problem with matching goes beyond whether a local authority agrees politically with the principle, it extends to whether there are enough black and dual heritage foster carers in the right locations to match young people

with. In some studies an overrepresentation of black carers is reported (Ofsted, 2011), in other studies a shortage is reported (The Fostering Network, 2015). Statistics can mask regional variations as well as the fact that black families do not form a homogenous group and so the prevalence of ethnic groups will vary.

The literature on the whole is mixed on the question of matching and same race placements. Thorburn et al (2000) emphasise the importance of placing black and minority ethnic children in families, which respect and support their racial and cultural background. Legislation also sends contradictory messages from: *'It may be taken as a guiding principle of good practice that, all things being equal and in the great majority of cases, placement with a family of similar ethnic origin and religion is most likely to meet a child's needs as fully as possible and to safeguard his or her welfare most effectively.'* (Children Act 1989 Guidance, Vol. 3, 2015). This contrasts with the Care Matters White Paper (2007) which stresses the fact that Government does not require a carer to be of the same ethnic background as the child only that they are sensitive to and understand the child's cultural background and values (p.12).

Good social work practice indicates that LAC from black and minority ethnic backgrounds would need support to appreciate their cultural heritage and to face racism and discrimination. This is where black carers can empathise with the young people and their birth parents' and help to facilitate a sense of ethnic pride. However, the principle of listening to young people should still apply, '*I was raised around white family life when I was in care. I wanted a white family, they were having none of it. They said I had to go to a black family' (A National Voice, 2002).*

It must be acknowledged also that, because ethnicity is very important to black children, white carers face extra challenges in providing them with necessary support (SCIE, 2005). These children would need help with their developing identity – especially so if they are very young and placed in an environment where very few black people lived. In some studies young people told of their growing sense of alienation and difficulties with social and personal relationships and mental health that arose as a result of being placed with white families (Sinclair, 2005).

Local authorities vary in their policies regarding same race placements. Munro (2001) commended the local authority in her study as going to great lengths to place children in same race placements and reported that the children involved appreciated this (p.133). This is in line with the literature in that young people who feel visibly 'different' want help from carers in dealing with racism and discrimination. They appear to appreciate being placed in an area where others share their heritage. On the other hand a number of studies (Gaskell, 2010, Oliver, 2010) reported young people as feeling that their views on the ethnicity or the religion of the family chosen for them were not considered when choosing placements for them.

Where the young person is dual heritage some studies reported additional difficulties caused by 'rigid practice' amongst practitioners (Owusu-Bempah, 1994, 2005). The argument centres around low expectations from workers compounded by society in general which stigmatises and pathologises this group leading to unmet needs (Owusu-Bempah, 2005, Okitikpi, 2005). One example of this is the decision making that assumes this group to be black and should be placed with black or mixed families yet ignoring individual conceptions of identity can do more damage than good (Ince 1998). It also overlooks early evidence that some black and dual heritage children who have been placed with white families do well (Bagley 1983).

2.14: Summary

The literature is far from unanimous in its acceptance that black and dual heritage looked after children and young people constitute a disadvantaged group with special needs that require different approaches. Studies are broadly consistent however on the need for groups of looked after young people to maintain positive cultural and racial identity. The psychological value of positive identity in terms of good mental health, attachment, resilience and emotional well-being has been well documented.

Research giving voice to the views of looked after children themselves is growing. Yet when subjected to closer scrutiny most of these studies only gave limited space to

minority voices. These limitations highlight the need for further research focusing on the views and needs of a more diverse range of looked after children. It is therefore unsurprising that a strong theme to emerge from this review is the marginalisation of black children in the research agenda and the concomitant lack of studies dedicated to eliciting their views, beliefs and perceptions regarding their specific experiences. Few studies were dedicated exclusively to investigating black and dual heritage looked after children's views. The same can be said for studies eliciting social workers and/or carers views on working with black and dual heritage looked after young people. Indeed, many studies mentioned this paucity of research and noted the irony of law and guidance (Children Act 1989; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1999, DfES, 2005) which suggests that promoting the principle of listening to, and supporting young people to give their views about the services they receive are yet to be taken seriously by researchers in relation to minority ethnic children and young people. The 'universalising' of white experience appears common, and much of the research into looked-after young people as exemplified by Munro (2001) and Beck (2006) only briefly refer to matters related to the ethnicity of their samples. A 'one size fits all' attitude prevails and as such runs the risk of missing the particular needs of this vulnerable group. It is addressing this gap that in part provides the rationale for this study.

Another key theme identified was the high turnover of social workers and the impact this has upon the effectiveness of the care that looked after children receive. The key impact seemed to be focused on the self-esteem of these children and young people who often interpreted workers leaving as abandonment. This leads to a lack of trust and defensive measures deployed against future workers to protect the self against future risk of hurt. These (mal) adaptive measures impaired looked after children's capacity to express emotions and held long-term implications for their emotional wellbeing. As such it is a serious matter warranting attention from practitioners and policy makers to ensure workers can invest in and stick with these relationships. The issue is bigger than individual workers finding the time and commitment as in most cases referred to, the infrastructure upon which they relied, fell short and workers reported high caseloads and challenging performance targets that acted against quality direct work. Young people spoke as one on this theme and were extremely clear that

they required more time in direct contact with their social workers if care was to be effective.

Qualitative followed by mixed approaches was the method of choice for researchers in this field. Gaining users voices was mostly achieved through interview and focus group using semi-structured interviews. Many studies highlighted the benefits of both qualitative designs combined with a focus on the positive, which they said provided carers and young people with an opportunity to reveal their strengths.

Holland (2009), for example, identified 44 international journal articles whose methods included gaining the views and experiences of looked-after children. She says this type of research is developing '*a broad range of methodological and theoretical frameworks*' (p.226). But again, a close analysis of those papers reveals few of them contain any reference to 'race'. This reflects a common trend in the literature, which led Boushel amongst others to observe: '*researchers attempting to select and incorporate an appropriate 'race' perspective are not well served by the existing methodological literature*' (Boushel, 2000. p.74).

A major methodological theme of the research samples was the tendency for almost all researchers to treat children and young people in care as a homogenous group. Perhaps as a result of their marginalisation in society, researchers, with the exception of some mentioned in this Chapter (e.g. Allain, 2007, Aymer and Okitikpi, 2010, Robinson, 2000, Barn et al 2005, Dogra, 2002, Graham, 2007, Owusu-Bempah, 2005) seem to replicate this trend and adopt a largely colour-blind methodology, which colludes in masking racial disparities. Hence, few studies are aimed directly at increasing knowledge about the needs of this particular group, and fewer utilise the voices of people from this demographic as part of their methodology. Whilst some studies differentiated between foster and residential care, studies generally did not allow for consideration of differences in experiences amongst groups or placement types. This in my view is a major flaw. Another methodological challenge from the review was the identification of a research sample. Gaining access to an appropriate study sample posed difficulties for many. The number of barriers built-in to protect these vulnerable young people also serves as barriers to researchers seeking information to improve services to them. In addition, black young people may be

reluctant to participate due to fears of racism. This might be overcome if information was given as to the ethnic background of researchers. Hence, studies need to state this information as in fieldwork, the impact of 'racial' or cultural affinity, or lack of it, between researcher and participant is an important aspect that needs to be considered. Often this was not alluded to in the studies reviewed although the main aim of their study was not ostensibly race related but many of the young people took the opportunity to bring up the topic of race. The nature of this discussion may have been different depending on whom they were talking to. Hence, in effect the messages we have from black voices being reported in white led (or white interviewer conducted) studies may not be truly authentic. The caveat to matching interviewers is that it does not guarantee appropriate interviewing skills or always correspond to participant's preference (Rhodes, 1991). Furthermore, such an approach may miss other important aspects of identity such as class, gender and ability, which may be present in 'same-race' interactions also (Rhodes, 1994).

The tendency to universalise experience in data analysis and findings represents a missed opportunity to learn about the needs of different groups. Moreover, relying on knowledge about the dominant group alone to set the policy agenda for all others means that a whole discourse may become institutionalised, or perpetuate stereotypes and generalisations which find their way into policy for all.

Largely as a result of its absence from the literature it seems clear to me that Government and local authorities need to review their policies and practice guidance in relation to the mental health and emotional wellbeing of black and dual heritage looked after young people as currently action on this seems to be down to the competence and commitment of individual workers. There is a case for this work to be informed by an explicit policy framework resting on a clear strategy for developing social workers understanding, knowledge and skills in working with this particular demographic. It is clear from the review that social workers can and do make a significant contribution to the emotional wellbeing of LAC where they are supported and enabled to do so by their employers.

The theoretical and policy context outlined in the literature above serves to contextualise the complexity of knowledge, policy and practice in this area. Methodological research

decisions were informed by this literature and are presented in the following Chapter 3, which offers a rationale for the philosophical approach of the study, as well as the choice of design; data collection techniques, and analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1: Introduction

This chapter starts by introducing the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher. It proceeds by providing an account of the methodology chosen and the theoretical foundations of this along with the rationale for its selection. It will then describe the study's design, participant sample, data collection procedures and instruments, and ethical considerations. It will finally consider the place of the researcher and how this contributes to the outcome of this research.

The term methodology refers not only to the methods used for data collection and analysis, but also to the theoretical assumptions that inform them (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998:3). The aim of this research is to explore how the experience of being looked-after impacts on the emotional well-being of black and dual heritage young people. In analysing the transcribed interview data, the researcher will be drawing on the work of Smith and Osborne (2003) in the form of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This approach is based on the premise that the researcher seeks to understand what a given experience is like (phenomenology) and how individuals made sense of it (interpretation). Included in the chapter is an explanation as to why this method of analysis was chosen and the implications of its theoretical principles (phenomenology and Hermeneutics) will be explored for the analysis.

3.2: Epistemology

This research accepts the proposition by Grix (2004) that all research is based on assumptions about how the world is perceived and how we can best understand it. That being the case the following section will lay bare the assumptions (the epistemological roots) that form the foundation of this research. Epistemology is '*the*

possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality' (Blaikie, 2000, p8) and is concerned with the 'theory of knowledge' (Thomas, 2009).

According to Crotty (1998 p4) epistemology underpins research as it leads to theoretical perspectives, which lead in turn to methodology that identifies method/s.

☞ Epistemology

    ☞ Theoretical Perspective

        ☞ Methodology

            ☞ Methods

Grix (2004) argues for another category, that of Ontology, and for this to precede epistemology. He describes a variety of ontological positions that are divided into those based on foundationalism and anti-foundationalism which roughly equates to positivism and anti-positivism and, according to Mantzoukas (2004), should be clarified at the outset of the research process. This study's ontological position is best represented under the grouping described by Grix (ibid) as anti-foundationlist. That is, the researcher believes that human actors through their interactions with the world construct reality and knowledge. This ontological position affects the way the research is undertaken as 'certain ontological positions are likely to lead to certain epistemological positions' (Grix, p61)'. The epistemological position most consistent with my ontological assumption is constructivism. Hence, this research does not propose to seek the objective 'truth' of the young people's experiences of being looked after. Instead, I seek to gain an understanding of how individual participants perceive and interpret the phenomenon of their experience from a subjective standpoint. Their reality is therefore viewed as relative instead of fixed and is in effect a relativist position (Willig, 2013).

In locating itself within a constructivist epistemology this study rejects the positivist view of the world along with the assumption that meaning is *discovered*. Rather, it adopts the position that knowledge and meaning are *constructed*, and that different people (and cultures) construct meaning in different ways. A constructivist research paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are many realities).

Stanley (2007) notes the dominance of positivist approaches to social research, which, says Ryan (2006) has led many to dismiss qualitative research as a tool in understanding the complexity of social life. This view is challenged by Holland (2009) who argues that enquiry into the lived experiences of in particular looked-after young people is developing ' a broad range of methodological and theoretical frameworks' (p.226).

The research framework for this study then, after Crotty appears thus:

Epistemology	Theoretical Perspective	Methodology	Methods

Constructionism

☛ Interpretivism

• Hermeneutics

• Phenomenology

☛ Hermeneutics Inquiry

☛ Individual interviews
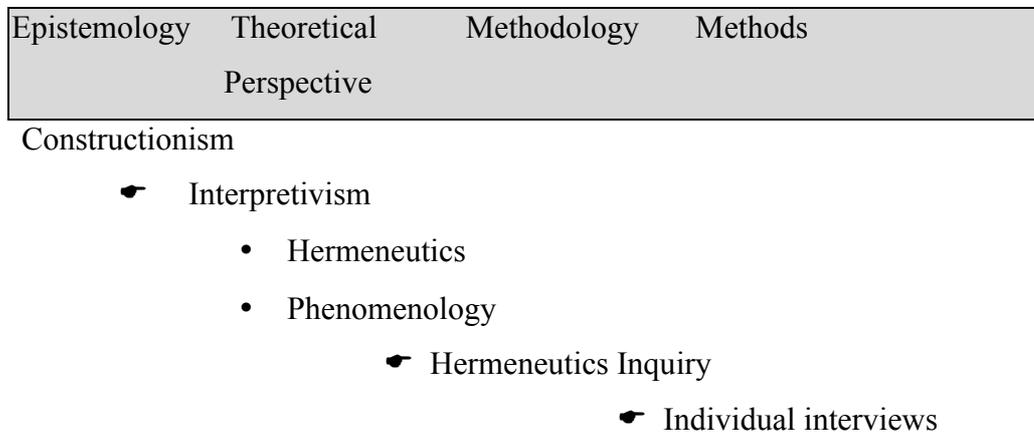
As a constructivist the key focus for this study is therefore to understand how the experience of being looked-after impacts on the emotional wellbeing of black and dual heritage young people *as a result of their lived experiences in the UK care system*. As can be seen above one key variant of interpretivism is phenomenology. Phenomenology is one of the theoretical perspectives embedded within a constructionist epistemology, constructivism meaning:

'*the belief that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context*' (Crotty,1998. p42).

One problem with Crotty's categorisation is that he presents the three epistemologies as rigid. Feast (2010) however, warns us of the importance in recognising that each epistemology holds strong and weak versions *'For instance, phenomenological research is categorised as constructivist; however, it is a broad term that can encompass approaches that range from thoroughly objectivist to a spectrum of approaches rather than a homogeneous class.'* At the same time care must be taken not to regard the links between epistemologies, theoretical perspectives and methods as overly rigid: *'although the basic beliefs [between epistemologies] may be quite incompatible, when one comes down to actual research methods and techniques used by researchers the differences are by no means clear and distinct'* (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008. p63).

3.3: Theoretical Perspectives

This research adopts a number of theoretical perspectives that can be grouped under the umbrella of interpretivism, defined by Bell and Bryman, (2007, p19) as 'knowledge generated through subjective meaning'. One key variant of interpretivism is phenomenology. Phenomenology shares with interpretivism and social constructionism an interest in the active role of human experience and consciousness in knowledge production. There are a number of different phenomenologies: idiographic (analysis of personal experience), Eidetic (general structure of experience across people) and Transcendental (puts to one side subjective process and attends to pure consciousness itself (Smith, 2004). Phenomenological research characteristically starts with concrete descriptions of lived situations, often first-person accounts (idiographic). The researcher proceeds by reflectively analysing these descriptions, then by offering a synthesised account (for example, identifying general themes about the essence of the phenomenon). According to Finlay (2008) it is important that the phenomenological researcher aims to go beyond surface meanings and 'read between the lines'. She cautions however, that it is this process of 'reading between the lines', which has generated a degree of uncertainty in this approach. Phenomenology then provides the justification for the choice and use of the data gathering technique employed. Using phenomenological enquiry the aim of the study is to uncover

meanings and perceptions from the sample of young people's perspectives and interpret their understandings against the backdrop of their cultural background.

The theories that inform this study, hermeneutics, social constructionism, AOP, and black perspectives sit together and complement each other. As the respondents in this study are black and dual heritage looked after young people and social workers it is correct that a black perspective be adopted that represent their worldviews.

3.4: Hermeneutics

Omery (1983) asserts that hermeneutic phenomenology uncovers the concealed meanings in phenomena; that is, meanings that are not revealed through direct investigation, analysis, and description. Hermeneutic phenomenology aims to understand human experience as it is lived. The focus is on highlighting aspects of experience that are usually taken for granted.

The assumptions of modern hermeneutics are that:

1. Humans experience the world in part through language, which makes
   possible both understanding and knowledge (Byrne, 2001).

2. The hermeneutic method can provide knowledge of what human beings believe, experience and perceive. The participant's experience is central.

3. Hermeneutics joined to a phenomenological approach leads not only to knowledge but also to enhanced understanding of the meanings of lived experiences (Byrne, 2001).

4. By discovering and analysing the lived experiences of participants, the researcher derives persistent themes.

The term hermeneutics is derived from a Greek root meaning "interpretive" and implies understanding particulars. As such Hermeneutics is central in this study as it is concerned with an emphasis on understanding conscious experience (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with understanding the life world or human experience as it is lived (Laverty, 2003). It is hermeneutics that enables the IPA researcher to decipher and understand meaning from text (Rennie, 1999). Hermeneutics is defined as the theory and practice of the interpretation of the meaning of texts (Ibid).

With descriptive phenomenology, researchers aim to reveal essential general meaning structures of a phenomenon. They restrict themselves to "making assertions, which are supported by appropriate intuitive validations" (Mohanty, 1983, cited in Giorgi, 1986, p.9). Interpretative phenomenology, by contrast, draws inspiration from the work of hermeneutic philosophers (Martin Heidegger being the most prominent) who argue for 'embeddedness' in the world of language and social relationships. "The meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation", says Heidegger (1962, p.37).

The difference between the 'descriptive' and 'interpretive' variants of phenomenology can be expressed through research. Giorgi (1985) is aligned closely with the descriptive Husserlian method. Edmund Husserl (1936-1970) is best known for rejecting positivist approaches to research in favour of generating knowledge from lived experience (Sokolowski, 2000). Husserl believed that the world could be understood by perceiving it in a manner uncontaminated by the researcher's past experiences and viewpoints. Smith (2004) rejects this use of 'bracketing' [bracketing is where a researcher attempts to set aside or 'bracket' their subjective views and understandings]. Instead his views accord with Finlay (2008) when she says that researchers need to bring a "critical self-awareness of their own subjectivity, vested interests, predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how these might impact on the research process and findings" (Finlay, 2008, p.17).

Martin Heidegger (1927-1962) criticized and expanded Husserl's phenomenological enquiry away from a philosophical discipline, which focuses on consciousness and

essences of phenomena towards elaborating existential and hermeneutic (interpretive) dimensions. This research uses qualitative phenomenological approach because the aim is the interpretation of experiences for the purpose of understanding the meaning of the experiences from the participants' perspectives (Omery, 1983).

Previous studies seeking to gather the views of young people about their care experiences have been found wanting in having a clear discernible theoretical base (Holland 2009). Nevertheless, Holland was able to name a number of perspectives she encountered. These included: children's rights; participative; social constructionism; resilience; attachment; phenomenological/interpretive and symbolic interactionism; Afrocentric, existential philosophy; life-course and child development. According to Holland, even where there is no obvious theory often the participative nature of the study implied a commitment to children's rights.

Madill et al (2000) argue that the same phenomena can be understood in different ways depending on the unique perspective of the participant and therefore all knowledge is provisional and relative. Through research we can therefore attempt to understand individual points of view but this understanding will always be related to this particular person, in this particular context, at this particular time (Larkin et al, 2006). This emphasises the fact that the researcher is also an active contributor in the research process and therefore takes an active role in knowledge discovery and construction (Jaeger and Rosnow, 1988).

3.5: Social Constructionism

This study also adopts a social constructionism approach. Social constructionism is an approach to human inquiry that encompasses a critical stance in relation to taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world, which are seen as reinforcing the interests of dominant social groups and a belief that the way we understand the world is a product of a historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people. Gergen (1985) characterises social constructionism as a movement toward redefining psychological constructs such as 'mind' 'self' and 'emotion' as socially

constructed processes, to be 'removed from the head and placed within the realm of social discourse' (p. 271).

Social constructionism suggests that the world we create and the meaning we create in the world are the result of social interaction, that is, talking with other people and living in a cultural context that transmits meanings to us (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Meanings are not inherent in objects or particular situations, rather we make meanings out of what we experience through interactions with others. Thus, social constructionists see numerous competing viewpoints of the world rather than one 'true' view.

According to this theory we cannot know reality apart from our interpretations of it. And this is where this approach accords with the broadly interpretivist orientation of this study. According to the objectivist, we make discoveries about the "real" world through building hypotheses and testing them; the observer is believed to be neutral. For social constructionist a neutral position is impossible to attain. The values and interests of the observer are always present, and the very act of observation changes that which is being observed (Dean and Rhode, 1998, p. 256). Our knowledge and knowing are shaped also by social, cultural, historical, economic and political conditions (Dean and Rhode 1998).

The role of language is seen as central in shaping rather than revealing meaning. In social constructionist view, reality is always filtered through human language. People understand and assign different meanings to their life events and thus experience the same reality differently (Laird, 1999, 154-155).

3.6: Anti-Oppressive Practice

In this context Anti-oppressive perspectives emphasise the impact of racism and the need to challenge racist structures and practices in social work. An Anti-oppressive

orientation is consistent with social constructionist model of racial differences produced within a context of unequal power relationships in society. It challenges structures of inequality in society and operates from the assumption that racism is pervasive in all societal institutions. A number of researchers have noted the lack of attention paid to black and dual heritage young people's lived experiences in social institutions such as public care (Graham and Robinson, 2004). This research operates from a position that the silencing of this group reflects a pathological view of looked after children in general and black looked after children in particular. The research is also underpinned and motivated by a '*lack of qualitative research that documents their [black children] views and experiences. The situation is particularly acute in public care settings where children are already disadvantaged and their life chances have been limited by factors outside of their control*' (Thomas, 2005). Like Ince (1999) the intention is to create opportunities for these children to 'voice' their experiences in order that others may gain a broader understanding of their needs. This connects to the American concept of 'Afrocentricism' which, according to its principal author Asante (1987, *in* Davis et al 2010), '*simply means to view a phenomenon such as the research question, from the standpoint of the people who are subjects of the study*'.

There is a need for research with oppressed groups to confront oppression during the research design and dissemination stages of the study (Oliver, 1992). Strier (2006) argues that the methodologies used in social work research should reject the dominant paradigms of social science research, which he says '*reduce research into mere technical evaluation and replaces intellectual and creative efforts with rules and regulations*' (Butler and Drakeford, 2000, p. 2). Instead, research should combine methodologies that are able to address the complex nature of oppression as well as its subjective, phenomenological dimensions. He argues for more qualitative, 'bottom-up', interpretive methods.

3.7: Black Perspectives

This perspective is consistent with and complimentary to Anti Oppressive Practice. It aims to reveal the perspectives and experiences of black and dual heritage looked after children and social workers. These aims are consistent with the interpretivist,

qualitative approach. In order to genuinely hear the voice of these young people, acknowledging their racial and cultural background is essential. It is necessary therefore to include a black perspective in the research. The black perspective has its roots in black liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. It is seen to be more than a response to racism in that it is 'underpinned by a critical understanding of the varying nature of power and powerlessness' (Burke and Harrison, 2001). Black Perspectives is described by Goldstein (2008) as:

- Recognising strengths, commonalities and diversity of black people
- Valuing black people and their right to self determination
- Challenging racism in all its manifestations
- Valuing the different ways of constructing and understanding the world that black people have developed

One stated aim of Black Perspectives is to support the individual and the collective through challenging the failure to meet the needs of black children and adults (Goldstein, 2008). It is acknowledged that LAC from minority groups can be doubly disadvantaged and researchers have been encouraged to make special efforts to include these children in research studies and provide them with a separate voice (Golding et al, 2006).

The black perspective is interested in the psychological wellbeing of black people and is critical of research paradigms and theoretical formulations that have a potentially oppressive effect on black people (Robinson 2009:16). Black Perspectives advocates argue that it is necessary to analyse black behaviour in the context of its own norms in order to create appropriate interventions. Says Robinson:

> '*Not only will a black frame of reference enable social workers to come up with more accurate and comprehensive explanations but it will enable them to build the kind of programmes within the black world which capitalise on the strengths of black people*' (pp17-18).'

Social work research is important for generating the knowledge that is needed to

develop appropriate social work policies and competent practices. The most effective way to ascertain the needs, services, and practices that are required for black and dual heritage looked after young people's emotional wellbeing is to elicit their experiences and views directly from them. In this way findings are generated from those who are experts by experience. According to Heidegger's philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, nothing in a participant's experience can be understood outside the context of the participant's own culture and preconceptions. While the world constructs us, we simultaneously construct the world from our own background and experiences (Laverty, 2003).

3.8: Post-Positivism

This qualitative research project falls within an interpretivist perspective and all questions and analysis are embedded within this theoretical framework. This enables me to move beyond a literal description of data towards providing conceptual findings. The intention is to bring new insights into the emotional impact on black or dual heritage young person as a result of being in the care system. Hence as an interpretivist I seek understanding rather than objectivity.

Positivists, on the other hand seek objectivity. Stanley (2007) suggests that the dominance of positivist approaches to social research has led researchers to neglect qualitative research paradigms. Ryan (2006) goes further and argues that the dominance of positivism has influenced people to assume that only research that follows the natural sciences and can predict, prove or make causal conclusions are worthy of support (p.13).

To positivists 'objectivity is innate' and researchers are responsible for putting aside their biases and beliefs and seeing the world as it is 'objectively'.

To paraphrase, Positivists believe that:

- What counts is the means (methodology) by which knowledge is created. These

means must be objective, empirical and scientific;

- Only certain topics are worthy of enquiry, namely those that exist in the public world;

- The relationship between the self and knowledge has been largely denied;

- knowledge is regarded as separate from the person who constructs it. The political is separate from the personal;

- Maths, science and technical knowledge are given high status, because they are regarded as objective, separate from the person and the private world;

- Knowledge is construed as being something discovered, not produced by human beings.

(In Ryan, 2006 p15)

This perspective has been criticised by researchers who argue that divisions between objectivity and subjectivity are socially constructed. These critiques came from feminism, post structuralism, critical psychology, anthropology, ethnography and developments in qualitative research (Ryan, 2006). This has led to a situation, says Ryan, where most positivistic research could be said to be post-positivistic where subjective knowledge is recognized as a valid form of knowledge and where people are seen to be capable of constructing knowledge. Ryan warns however, that the modernist paradigm is still strong and that positivism, although challenged, is still the dominant public model for research (p.17).

Grix, (2004, p84) (below) argues that post-positivism can be placed between positivism and interpretivism and that 'interpretivism is post-positivism' (p78).

Explanation   Understanding

⇩   ⇩   ⇩

Positivist   Post-Positivist   Interpretivist
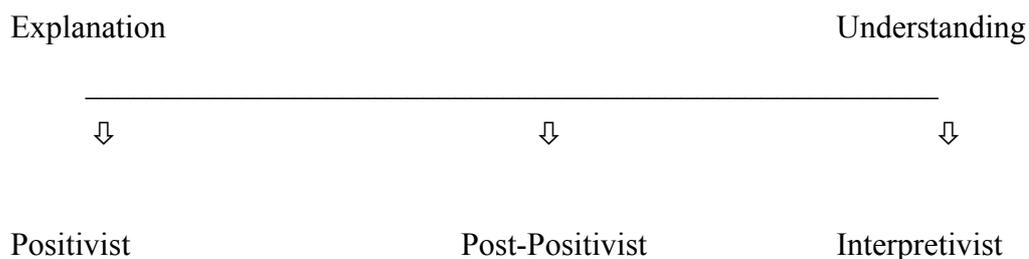
Grix sees the above categories as overlapping but distinct, especially so between 'explanation' and 'understanding' when he says many interpretivists seek to explain and positivists seek also to understand.

3.9 Methodology

The research was designed to address the following questions:

- *How does the experience of being looked after impact on the emotional well-being of black and dual heritage looked after young people?*
- *How do practice frameworks, and professional interventions best promote emotional well–being in this population?*

These questions have been designed to inform both practice and policy and are informed by existing literature and as such have been designed to fill a gap in the literature. The questions also emerged through the researcher's personal theories, which were then developed through existing theory and research. I am a black male and an experienced children's services social worker and have previously worked with looked after young people as a qualified social worker and a residential care worker, these experiences also contributed to the identification of the research questions.

As the focus of this study is unswervingly on the voices of the young people and their interpretations of their experiences in care the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) forms no part of the method or methodology of this study. As a researcher I was less interested in the views of the young people on this screening tool than I was in their subjective feelings of the quality of their time spent in care.

The SDQ provides a measure of mental health and this study seeks to capture how the young people understand their experiences through subjective meaning rather than measure their mental health. Measuring phenomena does not in itself improve it,

qualitative research exploring understandings and meanings may generate ideas and recommendations to help address problems - as such the SDQ did not feature in the methodology for this study. In addition, as I did not want to raise the potentially stigmatising topic of mental health direct with the young people, a question regarding the SDQ as an early identification-screening tool was not included. Respondents raised issues in relation to their psychological well-being and how far their carers met their emotional needs, but none mentioned the SDQ as playing a part in raising the awareness of their carers or social workers.

Another reason for the omission in this methodology is the question of credibility in the use of the SDQ in capturing accurately the needs of BME and mixed race children (Malek, 2011) despite reassurances that it is internationally standardised (Goodman, 2001). Richards et al (2006) recommend '*that the SDQ is best used as a tool within a wider, holistic assessment that encourages young people's participation in that process.*' (p49).

Epidemiological and clinical research on the mental health of looked after children provide little evidence in relation to black and ethnic minorities (Richardson and Joughin 2000; MHF, 2002) even less so on mixed race young people. As a result of these factors it is necessary that the needs of this group be highlighted using qualitative methods.

The aim is to 'give voice' to black and dual heritage looked after young people in the belief that in order to fully understand participants' experiences they need to be given what Graham (2007) calls 'agency'; meaning that that they can speak for themselves. In this way we '*gain a deeper understanding of their everyday experiences and complexities as well as a positive outlook of [their] capacities and recognition of their competence*' (Sanbaek, 1999).

The planned data gathering methods included interview and focus group. These methods were chosen for their ability to uncover in-depth understanding of personal perspectives and the opportunity to probe face-face for clarification and ensure understandings are correct. The aim was to interview looked after young people and gain emergent themes and insights that would then inform interviews with the social

work professionals and the focus groups. Focus groups were selected because of their potential for stimulating social interaction (Parker and Tritter, 2006). However, due to considerable barriers experienced in securing consent from various gatekeepers to access young people in care between the ages of eleven and eighteen years of age a decision was taken to alter the research design to incorporate an older age range (sixteen to twenty five) to overcome consent issues and to use an intermediary to facilitate introductions. It was reasoned that this change in focus would not only increase the numbers able to participate through respondents now becoming the responsibility of leaving care teams and thus having a greater degree of autonomy in their ability to give consent giving but, for those older than eighteen, they would have had time to reflect on their experiences and their responses would benefit from richer, more 'thick' description of their experiences. In the event the youngest respondent was aged eighteen. These changes were brought about to avoid what McGee (1999) describes as the most problematic aspect of doing research: '*The process of negotiating with gatekeepers to gain access to research subjects...is probably the most overlooked but problematic of all stages in successfully completing a research project'* (p.45).

The sample of young people was recruited from the cases of a South London Local Authority Leaving Care team. All of the young people interviewed were at various stages of involvement with this service and were known directly or indirectly to the manager of that service who facilitated my access to them through introductions. The social workers interviewed were recruited from the same London Borough as the young people through the same facilitator but it was not a requirement of the study that the professionals involved knew the young people.

The possibility of sample bias might occur in locating respondents from one Local Authority where respondents might be known to each other and discuss their responses. This risk was checked through strict adherence to anonymity on my part and the part of the gatekeeper involved. In addition, the gatekeeper spoke of each respondent leading very separate existences from each other and that none participate in forums for care leavers. The possibility remains that those respondents who consent to talk to me would be those who are in some way atypical from the wider sample. It is possible that those who volunteer to speak to researchers are likely to be those who

are doing relatively well in care as those who are receiving treatment, involved in criminality, or addicted will be harder to reach, potentially indicating recruitment bias. Also, where a purposive sample is used and social workers choose the sample, as was the case here, the researcher loses control of selecting the sample and bias may enter in this way also. Steps were taken to ameliorate this by being clear with the social worker that the criteria needed to be adhered to and that I was willing to interview respondents she felt may be 'risky' due to their temperament in order to avoid focusing only on those young people who staff felt were 'safe' and well balanced with no external manifestation of any problem or issue. Additional safeguards regarding venue were taken nonetheless with those young people presenting potential risks to the researcher.

The sample was acquired according to the non-probability purposive sampling technique where participants are deliberately selected to represent a small information rich – non-statistically representative - sample. Patton (1990) considers the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich participants/cases for study in depth. Purposive sampling is sampling where participants are selected according to characteristics that will enable the researcher to answer the research questions. Although there are a wide range of non-probability sampling techniques to draw on (see Patton, 1990) this research uses the technique of homogenous sampling. This is where the sample share the same characteristics according to criteria set by the researcher. Advantages of this are that it allows researchers to make generalisations from the sample being studied and simplifies analysis. However, a disadvantage is that selection is down to researcher judgement, which makes it difficult to defend the representativeness of the sample. In addition selection by one or more gatekeepers and self-selection from the young people themselves, even against clear criteria, can be biased according to how many young people were approached and how many refused to participate and why? (Munro, 2001). In addition, bias enters because the participants are volunteers. Young people who are accessible and who are willing to participate are likely to be those who did relatively well in care. As mentioned above, those who are receiving treatment for an emotional/behavioural disorder, addicted or involved in criminality will be harder to reach.

Difficulties also arose in arranging for more than one participant to be present at any venue at any one time so it was then decided to focus on individual interviews as the sole data-gathering instrument to reduce further delay in gathering data. The literature supports the change as enacted from two forms of data gathering techniques to one. Worrall-Davis and Marino Francis (2008) consider that there 'is no clear evidence to suggest which method is most effective in obtaining comprehensive collections of young people's views…' but say that most studies they reviewed were consistent in the use of semi-structured group interview and individual interview especially with young people over the age of 11. In the 44 research methodologies reviewed by Holland (2009) the most popular data collection method used was interviewing.

A possible further drawback in using focus groups is that groups are not seen as the most appropriate method for researching sensitive issues in depth (Morgan 2002). Morgan (ibid) cites Michell (1999) who compared data obtained by group against a matched group where the data was obtained by individual interview and concluded it was only in the individual interviews that passive and shy members began to talk genuinely about personal issues (p41). However, group interviews with children allow the researcher to be led by the participants' agenda (Balen et al 2000). They are also particularly suited to generating a range of opinions and experiences and of getting the varied perspectives of children (Callaghan et al 2003). The aim is to achieve a form of 'guided conversation' (Lofland and Lofland 1995 p85). Nonetheless, Punch (2002), found that two thirds of young people in her study of children in residential care preferred individual interview over group because it offered more privacy. She explained that people in care tend to experience extreme problems and so are more concerned with confidentiality. Curtis et al (2004) recommends that wherever possible, researchers should ask the young people in advance whether they would be happier talking one-to-one, in a small friendship based group, or in pairs, and, depending on the subject matter, whether they prefer talking in same sex groups

3.9.1: Sample -Young People

Ten (n10) young people were interviewed for this research. Consent was obtained twice – once from the intermediary who is a professional social work manager in an

inner city local authority leaving care team known and trusted by all participants –
and again by the researcher prior to interview. All young people interviewed were
aged between 18 and 24. Seven (n.7) of the sample were male and three (n.3) female.
Four (n.4) participants were dual heritage.

The payment of a reward was considered a significant motivator for the young
people's participation in this research.

(see Table 1 below for characteristics).

Table No.1: Characteristics of LAC Participants

Identifier	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Time spent looked-after (Years)
R1	Female	Mixed Heritage	18 years	7
R2	Male	Black Caribbean	19 years	7
R3	Female	Mixed Heritage	21 years	18
R4	Male	Mixed Heritage	18 years	3
R5	Male	Black Caribbean	24 years	5
R6	Female	Black Caribbean	18 years	3

R7	Male	Mixed Heritage	23 years	15
R8	Male	Black Caribbean	21 years	4
R9	Male	Black Caribbean	19 years	5
R10	Male	Black Caribbean	20 years	4

The sample was acquired according to the non-probability purposive sampling technique where participants are deliberately selected to represent a small information rich – non-statistically representative - sample. Patton (1990) considers the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich participants/cases* for study in depth. Purposive sampling is sampling where participants are selected according to characteristics that will enable the researcher to answer the research questions. Although there are a wide range of non-probability sampling techniques to draw on (see Patton, 1990) this research uses the technique of homogenous sampling. This is where the sample share the same characteristics according to criteria set by the researcher. Advantages of this are that it allows researchers to make generalisations from the sample being studied and simplifies analysis. However, a disadvantage is that selection is down to researcher judgement which makes it difficult to defend the representativeness of the sample. In addition selection by one or more gatekeepers and self-selection from the young people themselves, even against clear criteria, can be biased according to how many young people were approached and how many refused to participate and why? (Munro, 2001). In addition, bias enters because the participants are volunteers. Young people who are accessible and who are willing to participate are likely to be those who did relatively well in care. Those who are receiving treatment for an emotional/behavioural disorder or addicted, involved in criminality will be harder to reach. To test this theory, Skues and Ward (2003) cross referenced data extracted from all 242 children's files with those that formed their

final interview sample and found that the sub-sample who were interviewed had better education, emotional and behavioural outcomes than those who were not interviewed (p.4). Interviewees were more likely to have had a positive view of their experiences than others. In support of this the anonymous follow up study through *Who Cares?* Magazine found greater levels of dissatisfaction with the care system (in, Ward et al, 2005 p8)

Munro et al (2005) notes how many Local authorities decline invitations to participate in research which they feel will be a burden on their staff or which may risk contravening the Data Protection Act 1998. Even those Local authorities that agree to participate present problems in terms of lengthy delays to reach decisions and respond to enquiries (Munro et al 2005). Richardson and Lelliot (2003) talking about looked-after children say: '*Looked after children have always been a difficult group to study, frequent changes in social worker, of placement, poor school attendance and mistrust of initiatives present significant challenges to researchers'* (p.250). Researchers also have to factor in how different local authorities have different preferences when it comes to researchers seeking consent (Munro et al 2005). Some local authorities may also be suspicious of researchers and research for fear that findings might show that they are not discharging their powers effectively.

The participants (young people) were purposively selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1 Spent a minimum of 6 months continuously being looked-after

2 Was not received into care as an unaccompanied asylum seeker;

3 Is black African, Caribbean or dual-heritage (black/white).

4 Is aged between 16 and 24.

5 Speaks English fluently without the need for an interpreter

3.9.2: Sample size

Patton (1990) observes that the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size. In a similar vein Mason (2010) found that studies using a phenomenological approach used between seven and 89 participant interviews and found that between five and twenty five (n. 5-25) interviews was most common for phenomenological studies. He also found that interview was used as the sole data gathering instrument in 20% of his reviewed studies (n.19.9%). Mason notes that ten interviews conducted by an experienced interviewer will produce richer data than fifty interviews done by an inexperienced interviewer (Mason, 2010). Sandelowski (1995) agrees and comments that due to the length of the interviews and the richness of the detail, that one case/interview can be sufficient, Morse (1994) however, recommends that at least six participants be interviewed in a phenomenological study.

As can be seen there is no prescription on sample size, which in the final analysis should perhaps be decided according to the aims and resources of researcher. While samples as large as 42 have been known (Lyons and Coyle, 2007) Smith and Osborne (2003) recommends 3-6 and caution researchers that data collection, transcription and analysis are very time-consuming. At the other extreme Lyons and Coyle (2007, p39) say they have been 'increasingly arguing the case for a sample of one'. In their evaluation of the use of IPA in health psychology Brocki and Wearder (2005) observe that as IPA is an idiographic approach the sample should be small. They note an emerging consensus amongst researchers for the use of smaller sample sizes. Smith (2003, p55) reminds researchers that in using IPA they are aiming to say something about the perceptions and understandings of their group rather than make general claims. Brocki and Wearder (2005) and Lyons and Cole (2007, p40) recommend that the sample profiles be relatively homogeneous and that purposive sampling of a defined group for whom the research question will be significant is best.

3.9.3 Sample - Social Work Professionals

Five (n5) social work professionals were interviewed for this research. All of the social work professionals interviewed (n.5) were female.

Table No.2: Details of Social Work Professionals

SW01	Female	Black Caribbean
SW02	Female	Black Caribbean
SW03	Female	Black Caribbean
SW04	Female	Black Caribbean
SW05	Female	Black Caribbean

The professional sample was selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Has worked with looked after young people for a minimum of 1 year;
2. Is black African, Caribbean or dual-heritage (black/white);
3. Has experience of working with cases of black and dual heritage looked after young people

The rationale for the inclusion of the professional voice was to provide data triangulation of the research questions alongside the data from the looked after

respondents. The adult participants in this study were selected because of their position in relation to the young people's sample. Having worked with both foster carers and looked after young people they are in a unique position to add to the knowledge of the experiences as described by the young people.

Hence, it was necessary to conduct the professional interviews after the young people to incorporate insights gained and emerging themes into questions for the professionals (see appendix 3).

It was anticipated that the semi - structured nature of the interview guide, through its open - ended questions, would elicit a narrative style response from the professionals about how they viewed and worked with child and family mental health problems. For this reason, close attention was paid to the style and nature of the language used by the professionals in the course of the interview. The semi- structured nature of the interview was intended additionally to track the evolution of professional's understanding of their practice over time and to identify the particular challenges they may have faced. In particular, the interview process was the vehicle through which the professionals were able to consider their role in relation to the agencies in which they worked and to comment on the factors that they perceived as facilitating or hindering positive change and good practice.

3.9.4: The Interview Process

The setting for the young people's interviews was most often an empty classroom in the University. This was agreed to suit the preferences of the participants. One interview took place in a local café due to unforeseen problems with access to the University and one took place in my car due to the availability of the person involved (I had discussed the idea of using my car for the interview with the intermediary who knew this young person well, as part of my risk assessment in using this venue. The participant had in fact suggested I go to his home, but this offer was declined, as I was not comfortable with the idea, and the intermediary had cautioned against it). All of the interviews with professionals took place in a meeting room in their place of work.

The start of the interviews was spent putting the participants (young people) at ease. I arranged to meet participants at the local tube station and engaged in introductory talk on the way back to the building where the interviews would be taking place. During this walk I would introduce myself; thank them for consenting to talk with me, and remind them again about the research I was doing (they would have received a letter of information and a consent sheet from the intermediary which contained information on ethics and consent. See Appendices 1and2). On arrival at the venue I offered refreshments and generally ensured they were comfortable, before moving to the interview room. Participants were then asked for their consent to record the interview – which they all gave.

All interviews conducted were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Questions were mostly open-ended and the interviews lasted an average of sixty minutes. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted privately with all participants based on a topic-guide. This guide contained a number of questions which acted as a prompt and were grouped under the following headings: stability; self-efficacy/esteem; discrimination; racial identity; network friendships; education; mood/behaviour; extracurricular activities (See Appendix 3). The topic guide was developed following a review of the literature and topics were selected for their ability to reveal the emotional state of the respondents. It was refined following the first interview and additional questions added in response to individual narratives. In this sense the first three interviews acted as pilots and were themselves included in the final number.

During the interviews participants were encouraged to take the lead in influencing the direction of the discussions and concerns that seemed important to them were followed further. The length of all interviews (young people and professionals) rarely lasted less than 1 hour.

3.9.5: Coding and Identification of Themes

Following transcription of the interviews the next stage involved identifying themes from the data. This started with pre-selected themes from the research questions and also themes that emerged from the data during the coding. These dominant themes were identified and where ideas and concepts recurred in the narratives they were categorized and given a title. Thus the process utilizes both a deductive and inductive approach to grouping the data before looking for relationships. The analytical approach follows that of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 2003). This approach explores the detail of how respondents consciously make sense of their experiences and the meaning these experiences hold for them.

The analysis process proceeded first by analysing the first transcript and identifying themes from this (see Appendix 5 for an example of the coding process). Subsequent scripts were then analysed and where new themes were identified the number of themes were expanded until all the scripts had been analysed. The process involves collapsing and revising themes where there was overlap and refinement of theme description where needed. The resulting thematic chart is appended (appendix 4).

Each transcript was given a code and names removed for anonymisation purposes. Pseudonyms were rejected as confusing and scripts were coded for each respondent R1-R10 for participants and SW01 to SW05 for social work respondents. The key to the code is kept securely separate so that it is possible to link each script to the actual respondent in order that behaviour or ideas can be linked to biographical characteristics of the participant in terms of age, gender or ethnicity (black or dual heritage). Each transcript is kept in an electronic file in a password-protected folder for ease of retrieval by the researcher.

Where appropriate, major themes and subthemes also incorporated the language used by the participants themselves, to indicate the closeness of the themes to the data itself, and thus illustrate the participants' 'voices' in the analytic narrative.

3.10: Analysis

Data from the transcripts was analysed through the experiential method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA views all information as having a human voice, a voice that must be revealed in textual form (Smith, 2004). IPA was introduced as a qualitative psychological analytic technique in the 1990s. According to Smith (2003) it aims to explore the details of how participants (individual or small group) consciously make sense of their experiences and the meaning these experiences hold for participants. 'The aim is to explore flexibly and in detail an area of concern' (Smith, 2003 p55). This is done through participants providing a detailed description and interpretation of the accounts of particular experiences or phenomena (Howitt and Cramer, 2008 p373). It is dynamic in that the researcher is very much part of the process as it is the preconceptions they bring to the process which influences the interpretive activity. Smith (ibid) calls this a 'double hermeneutic' in which the participants try to make sense of their world while the researcher is trying to make sense of them making sense of their world. Here the focus was on identifying key wordings, phrasings, themes and patterns, and other similarities in the use of language that reveal the underlying meaning of expressions and statements.

The analysis was conducted flexibly in the manner recommended by both Smith (2003) and Howitt and Cramer (2008). The developing analysis involved moving from a focus on the individual to a more shared understanding and from a descriptive level to a more interpretative one (Smith et al, 2009). Both Smith (Ibid) and Howitt and Cramer (Ibid) provide examples of the IPA data analysis process to follow that consists of 6 stages:

Stage 1

The first step in the IPA analytical process was to familiarise myself with the data of the first transcript. As a result of personally transcribing the script I then re-read the transcript and listened back to the audio-recorded interviews as necessary. Consideration was given to the idea of not transcribing the data and using the recordings direct but this was rejected when the difficulty of locating specific ideas

and quotes from a specific respondent became apparent. Transcribing the recordings also enabled me to listen out for vernacular terms that might be easily overlooked by someone who lacked familiarity with this group's cultural norms. Transcribing was done with contemporaneous field-notes to hand which supplemented transcript data and added depth to the process. This allowed me scope to comment on behaviour and emotion of respondents where relevant. Hammersley (2010) and Bailey (2008) support this method and view it as a more rigorous and accurate process than paying someone else to do it. The process affords invaluable familiarisation with the data and because the process of transcription involves judgment questions about the level of detail to include and I was best placed to judge these. Once I was familiar with the transcript I then had an overall sense of the data and it was then possible to start making notes describing any striking issues and anything of interest. Different colour highlighters were used to assist with identifying examples of different themes. Once this process has been completed for the whole transcript, I was in a position to begin to name themes by a process of abstraction.

Stage 2

This stage involved me in generating analytic categories in reference to the story told. This iterative process of coding and generating themes examined the language and concepts contained in the narrative. This process ensured that I began to identify a specific Gestalt (Heidegger, 1999), by which the respondent could be seen to reflect, understand, and think about their care experiences. New themes that emerged during this analytical process were incorporated into the coding framework. Where possible and appropriate, themes and subthemes reflected the language used by the respondent in order to indicate the closeness of the themes to the data itself, and illustrate the respondent 'voice' in the analytic narrative (see Appendix 4 for the thematic map of major themes and subordinate themes).

Stage 3

This stage involved the search for connections between themes and grouping these in clusters. Similar themes were then grouped and given a title. Titles and theme descriptions was an attempt to capture the core of the themes in the most concise way

possible. As mentioned above, I also tried, where possible to include the language used by the participants themselves, to indicate the closeness of the themes to the data itself, and thus illustrate the participants' 'voices' in the analytic narrative.

Where the number of themes needed to be reduced, the decision to retain a theme was not made on the basis of prevalence alone, but rather on the ability of the theme to illuminate other themes and on the richness and power of the extracts of data that the themes represent. In developing emergent themes, I attempted to maintain the complexity of the narrative by mapping the connections and patterns that were seen to exist between the themes. Themes were expressed as quotes, which were intended to capture the psychological and social essence of the reported experience.

Stage 4

The fourth stage involves mapping the groups of themes, and identifying any common links between them in a table, ordering them for importance (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). This can include a quote from the participant as an example and noting where this was found. During this process the themes that closely followed the questions on the schedule, clustered together easily such as education, whilst others that emerged from the data was considered for its relationship to the object of the study and how interesting it was and added to the list of themes if thought appropriate. This process required me to reflect repeatedly on the original narrative to check the emerging analysis and the accuracy of interpretation.

Stage 5

Stage five is where I moved onto the other respondents' transcripts and analysed against the initial respondent's transcript for similarities. In essence I repeated stage 1-4 above for each transcript. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) advise that within IPA it is important to treat all cases in their own terms in order to do justice to their own sense of individuality. I analysed each narrative separately so that the ideas and themes that had emerged from the preceding analysis did not influence the hermeneutic process. Having analysed every narrative I reflected on the connections between the themes identified and identified those that appeared the most powerful and grouped these as superordinate themes. Subordinate themes were categorised

under these superordinate. The respondents own terminology were used to describe sub-themes where appropriate to retain authenticity, and where also their words reflected deeply held strong feelings as in the sub-ordinate theme of 'nine-to-fivers'. This specific phrase was used by two respondents to describe carers and practitioners who they thought were motivated by financial gain. It was clear when analysing the narratives from the other respondents that they shared this sentiment about their carers without using that specific phrase. The shared sentiment was deemed sufficient to justify the use of the phrase as a sub-theme as it vividly captured the meaning behind the phrase in the young people's own words.

Stage 6

The final stage, stage six is the writing up of the analysis. The major and sub-ordinate themes were established, described and illustrated with verbatim quotations. It is at this stage that I sought a conceptual explanation of the individual narratives which meant transcripts were read and re-read to check accuracy of thematic analysis and identify any divergent issues that I felt was important to include even if not widely shared.

3.11: Ethics

Ethical considerations for this research included compliance with data protection laws and gained clearance from London Metropolitan University Research Ethics Panel before the field work stage of data gathering. This covered a number of principles that included:

- *Informed consent of participants*
- *Avoidance of harm*
- *Anonymity and confidentiality*

3.11.1: Informed consent:

Participants were approached through an intermediary for appropriate consent in writing. Consent included the right to withdraw consent at any time. Common to securing informed consent was the provision of key information in the form of a letter (See Appendix 3). This included:

- Aims of the research project
- Name and pen-picture of researcher with contact details and address
- Name of organisation supporting researcher and contact details in case of complaint
- Purpose of research
- What the information will be used for
- What consent is being sought for
- Voluntary nature of participation
- How much of participants' time is required
- Agreement to comply with the local authority's policies and procedures
- Reassurances of confidentiality (and exceptions to this)
- Details of payment
- How long the information will be kept

3.11.2: Avoidance of Harm

Honesty and transparency about the research is an essential part of building trust with participants and all stakeholders. During the interviews ethical dilemmas may arise for the interviewer at any time and interviewees should be informed prior to the start of the interview of the rules regarding confidentiality and the treatment of information that may be of an abusive nature. In short, if a participant says anything that the

researcher considers to present a threat to, or is causing actual harm to anyone, the researcher will act to safeguard their safety and well-being. In most circumstances this will be done in the full knowledge and consent of the interviewee. The interviewer is an experienced children's services social worker and has been Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checked (enhanced).

The potential of harm or risk of harm to actual participants and the interviewer are low. In the event that a participant should become emotionally upset at a particular topic of discussion the agreements before each session includes the right to withdraw from the interview at any point. It also reminds participants that the interviewer is available following the interview to talk through any such issues.

3.11.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

The research complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and its principles. As a general principle, information collected about the young people will be stored and used only for the purposes for which it was collected. More specifically the project will comply with the following DPA conditions:

- That the data must not identify an individual nor be processed in a way that could cause distress to an individual.
- That researchers do not approach data subjects without the appropriate consent being obtained
- That the data will not be disclosed to third parties not involved in the research
- That the data used for the research will be kept secure and that all data no longer required for research will be destroyed within an agreed time scale.

Anonymity will be fully protected and no names will be used in the analysis or writing up of the data received.

Confidentiality is assured and identities linking participants to transcripts will be available only to the researcher. Social Workers will not have the right to see young people's interview transcripts and vice versa. Confidentiality will only be breached where not to do so places a child or adult at risk of harm. This is a legal requirement under the Children Act 1989 that the needs of the child are paramount and overrides the common law duty of confidentiality and associated legislation (Human Rights Act 1998, Data Protection Act 1998)

3.11.4 *Positionality*

As research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants (England, 1994) it is important to state my 'position' in relation to both sets of respondents. My position as a black male who is a qualified social worker having practiced mainly in the same geographical region that both sets of respondents live and work and now researching that area I would have made a number of assumptions based on prior knowledge and experience that need declaring. Conceptually Positionality is close to Reflexivity in that both seek to examine potential sources of influence and therefore bias on the research process. The theoretical perspective of IPA involves a 'double hermeneutic' in that the respondents are trying to make sense of their world while the researcher is trying to make sense of the respondents making sense of their world (Smith and Osborn 2008).

In relation to the young people I share their racial heritage and for some I also share their gender and ethnic background. We differ in age as I am of an older generation to them and in terms of social class all of the young respondents have had fragmented initial education and none are at University. Most are unemployed or at college and so we also differ in terms of social class in relation to being a member of the 'professional' class. I have lived in London for all of my life and I have a background in working with looked-after young people as a social worker, youth worker, and clinical social worker at a Child Guidance Unit and as a residential care worker. I am also a qualified teacher, which would have brought me into daily contact with looked after young people and their carers. It was this background that provided the interest to investigate the topic of this research initially. My employment as an Educational

Social Worker saw me working with special schools and Pupil Referral Units working with children, young people and families who were referred by schools and GPs for problems to do with the young person's emotional or behavioural difficulty. At that Child Guidance Clinic my case load involved working therapeutically with biological and foster parents to help them to support their child or young person to achieve behavioural change in the issue that was causing concern for their education or general health and wellbeing. My observations and reading arising from previous work experiences with looked after young people and their carers also led to the interest in studying this topic.

Being situated in an urban area of South London my caseload as a social worker, a youth worker, a clinical social worker and an education social worker contained a high number of black and dual heritage young people of both genders. Often, home visits or clinical visits by the family to the Unit would involve carers and this afforded me a unique insight into the quality and depth of the emotional relationship between carer and young person. Often, the young person would require a great deal of time developing positive relationships and gaining trust to overcome their initial reticence to engage with me. Here, I found my 'positionality' useful in engaging with the young people and was aware from conversations with the young people that my black identity helped to establish these early relationships and it is these same attributes, which I employed with the research respondents.

The principle method of investigation was individual interview. My expectation was that as a black man I might be afforded more genuine honest accounts from the black and dual heritage young people about their experiences with carers and professionals. This has some support in the literature in that people tend to engage more with those with whom they share some aspect of commonality (Chang, 2002). I was conscious of using a relaxed open yet respectful manner and informal style of introduction and ensured they knew I was grateful to them for their effort in speaking to me. I was fairly confident that I could understand any slang that might have been employed and through the way I interacted with them I sought to give them permission to explore any area that they felt was relevant without censor. Indeed, where two respondents used a swear word to emphasise a point and apologised I gave them permission to express themselves how they liked. No young person refused to discuss any area

raised and to the best of my knowledge did not hold back on details as some of the quotes garnered were intimate and revealing.

My positionality with the professional respondents is that I am a qualified registered social worker and share a similar age profile, social class and race. The professional respondents are all female and that is where we differ. Reflecting on this difference this might have made I could see no obvious point in the process where my gender would have made a difference.

My position as a black social worker and social work academic however, meant that I could identify with their responses as social workers and understood their meaning when they employed social work jargon to describe their ways of working and assessment tools and procedures. The professionals often asked me what my findings were thus far as they were curious about the subject matter. They were particularly interested in what the young people said about identity, especially the dual heritage young people and seemed disappointed to hear the low esteem in which young people held them. Overall, my position in relation to both groups I believe was strengthened through my identity. Both sets of respondents appeared to welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues raised and given the nature of some of the racialised views of both sets of respondents gave them permission to elucidate those experiences the way they did.

3.12: Reflexivity

Heidegger (1999) argues that the analysis of a transcript can demonstrate the conventions and expectations of a respondent's mores and that this enables a clearer understanding of their lived experience based on the language they use. Moreover, through engaging in this type of analysis, Heidegger (p.14) suggests that the researcher should not '*separate themselves from the people describing the experience*'. As human beings, researchers bring some of their personal experiences, biases, beliefs and attitudes into the research process (Wall et al, 2004). Charmaz (1995) asserts that the involvement of the researcher is acknowledged as a legitimate

factor in the research process, and that this will in turn influence the kind of data that is collected. Charmaz states in this regard, '*that the interaction between the researcher and the researched produces the data, and therefore the meanings that the researcher observes and defines*' (Charmaz, 1995, p35).

Potential bias to this research is that the researcher shares the same racial background as most of the participants. He is also deeply committed to social justice and maximizing the quality of experiences for all looked after young people especially those who have an identity that is subject to adverse treatment in the wider society as a result of their racial identity. The rationale is to understand the meaning of the experience as it is perceived by the one having the experience. Such a perspective requires hermeneutic analysis (Leonard, 1989). Hence, bias and influence of the researcher on the experience and research process is seen by some to be kept to a minimum by bracketing (Ahern, 1999). However, the assumption that the researcher can successfully discard any prior interest in, or knowledge of, the research topic in question in order to ensure that preconceived ideas of findings are rejected. I believe the priority is to identify preconceptions and for me to be aware of my potential to be biased. This stance accords with hermeneutic phenomenology rooted in Heidegger's philosophy, which accepts all that the researcher brings to the enquiry: '*it is impossible to rid the mind of the background of understandings that has led the researcher to consider a topic worthy of research in the first place*' (Lopez and Willis 2004 p729). It refutes the Husserlian view that the researcher's views and experiences can be 'bracketed' off from the research process ensuring that no pre-conceived views influence the object of the study.

Adhering closely to hermeneutics, Smith (2004) rejects the use of bracketing, as did I (bracketing is where a researcher attempts to set aside or 'bracket' their subjective views and understandings). Instead Smiths view accords with Finlay (2008) when she says that researchers need to bring a '*critical self-awareness of their own subjectivity, vested interests predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how these might impact on the research process and findings*' (Finlay, 2008, p17). This bracketing process, according to Finlay (2008), is often misunderstood and misrepresented as being an effort to be objective and unbiased. Instead she says, the researcher aims to

be open to and see the world differently. The process involves putting aside how things supposedly are, focusing instead on how they are experienced.

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the philosophical underpinnings informing the research and explained how these positions subsequently informed the choice of theory and analytical methods and procedures. The phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic aspects of the methodology aim to enable a full and rich description of what it means to the respondents to have spent a period of time being looked-after by the State as black and dual heritage young people. It has been established that the aims of the research, in seeking to uncover subjective experiences, is best served through adopting a qualitative approach utilising IPA. Data triangulation is provided through the additional voices of social work professionals whose working lives focus on individuals who share similar characteristics as the sample.

The following chapter is concerned with the presentation of the data analysis and findings. It will present the data collected and illustrate the application of the methodological procedures described above.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1: Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an interpretative narrative of the research findings. Data was collected from two data sources (young people and professionals) prior to analysis using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. The young people interviewees comprised 10 (n10) black and dual heritage young people all of whom had either spent of a minimum of 6 months being looked after and were now (at the time of interview) a care leaver, or were still receiving services from the social services as part of leaving care services or under the Leaving Care Act (2000) (under this act young people are supported up until they aged 25 if in they remain in full time study). The young people were made up of 7 males and three females, two of the females and three the males were dual heritage. Nine of the ten young people respondents were Caribbean or white/Caribbean mixed (one was black African) all were aged between 18 and 24 and none expressed adherence to any particular religion. My aim was to gather 'thick' description (Geertz, 1973) of their care experiences and how this impacts on their emotional well-being. Brief biographies of the young people are as follows:

R1 was an 18-year-old dual heritage female who has thus far spent five years as a looked-after young person. Social services entered her life when she was aged 11 when her white (English) dad died. The relationship with her black Jamaican mother then broke down - R1 did not go into details about why this was but said that as a result she went to live with her older sister who lived in a multi-racial urban area. Two years later R1's sister had a stroke and could no longer care for her and that was when R1 entered care through emergency foster placement. She recounts that thereafter she was placed with 'lots' of foster carers as far as she can remember she

experienced about ten different care placements none of which was residential. R1 is of the opinion that she experienced so many changes because none of them was suitable for her except the last one who genuinely cared for her and was matched to her. According to R1 the other carers didn't understand what it was like being in care she also thought most were carers were in it because they get paid well for doing it.

R2 was a male black Caribbean aged 19 at the time of the interview. R2 identified himself as Caribbean British and first entered care system aged 10 and remained until aged 17. He says he has been all over London in foster care, which created problems in terms of being placed with white carers in white parts of the city. He said: '*you can't put an alligator into a chicken cage and expect the alligator to get along with the chicken you know what I mean?*' R2 went into care because his biological mother was addicted to drink and drugs and according to R2 was a bit of a 'wild child' and had him aged 16. R2 says that when his Uncle was around all was fine but the Uncle died and 'everything went to pot'. He is not in touch with his mother as he doesn't like her. Throughout his time in care he enjoyed a stable relationship with his maternal grandmother. He is now living on his own and has support from social services.

R3 was a dual heritage female aged 21 who entered care when she was a 1-week-old baby. She was never told why she was received into care. Aged 3 she knows that she was placed with a black Caribbean adoptive family with whom she stayed for 5 years. This family later adopter R3's younger sister but she was not adopted as aged 8 she recalls she had quite severe behavioural problems. She went to live with a female Jamaican foster carer until aged 12. The move came about due to R3's behaviour especially at school and risky behaviour outside of school like playing 'chicken' with tram trains. A placement with another Caribbean family (ethnicity unknown) followed but this also broke down amid accusations of fire setting. R3 then entered residential care which she hated and stayed for a brief 3-week period. As a result of drinking and smoking R3 was referred to therapeutic intervention. This was unsuccessful and R3 was moved from London to a midlands city in a residential care home. She stayed there for 1 year before returning to London aged 17 to stay in an all-girls care home before going to college to do catering.

R4 was an 18-year-old dual heritage male whose mother was half-Turkish half Pakistani and father Jamaican. R4 has only met his mother twice and father once. R4 entered care aged 5 with adoptive parents with his half-sister sister who was a year older. But this broke down when the siblings were aged 16 and 15 at which point the adoptive parents kicked out R4's sister, who by then had begun to self-harm and take drugs, followed one year later by R4 himself who was beginning to develop anger management issues. According to R4 the adoptive parents couldn't handle adolescents whereas they coped with younger children.

R5 was interviewed as a 24-year-old who identifies himself as a black male. His heritage includes a black Jamaican father and a mother who is dual heritage (half Caribbean/half White UK). R5 was in care from aged 13 until aged 18 because of 'family issues', in that his mother was involved with the Police and other issues. R5 identified himself as English until an encounter with the Police where they challenged this and he complied and since then has identified as black Caribbean. At 15 R5 went to prison for 11 months for violence, which he said he needed, and went from there into semi-independent residential care. He has since had two flats, which he lost due to not coping with paying bills, and other responsibilities that come with living independently. He has 'good' memories of being care when younger. Out of 6 full siblings he was the only one who went into care. This he attributes to his behaviour and fighting with his sister. His father died when he was a baby and he now enjoys a good relationship with his mother.

R6 was a 18-year-old black Caribbean female who entered care aged 15 and left aged 18. When aged 15 she was living with her mother who had a car crash and subsequently lost her job and her home and became depressed. As a result of an altercation the Police were called and said that her mother, who had two other younger children to care for, could not cope and the children could not stay in the house, which was freezing and contained no food. R6 was placed with a series of foster placements some of which worked, and some of which did not work. Those that did not work were put down to unsuitable matching of ethnic background by R6. An example was being placed with African foster carers which lasted only 3 days due to the differences in cooking and behavioural expectations. R6 had behavioural

problems and was excluded from school for vandalism and attended a PRU which she described as the worst 6 weeks of her life.

R7 Was a dual heritage male aged 23 who had spent 15 years in care. During that time he was placed with foster carers and had a fairly stable placement with only a few carers. He did however develop behavioural issues, which resulted in exclusion from school and being educated in a PRU. R7 said he couldn't concentrate in school due to his emotions '*being all over the place'*. He sought to avoid the stigma of being in care by not telling anyone. Although mixed race, R7 was only placed with black carers, one of which attempted to do identity work with him by taking him to Jamaica with her. Like R5, R7 spoke of adopting an identity imposed on him by the Police after they corrected his identification from English white to black, which he accepted and adopted. R7 went to prison for a short spell for an unidentified offence in his mid-teens when in the PRU.

R8 Was a black African male aged 21 who had been in care for 4 years. In that time he had moved placement four times in 3 years. Most of the placements were in residential homes except for 1-week he spent in semi-independent care in a midlands town aged 16 but he returned to London shortly after a move he now sees to be a mistake. By his admission he had a fearsome temper and would shout at carers and in residential homes would need to be physically restrained on numerous occasions. R8 has undergone inpatient therapy following an emotional breakdown. He is a survivor of physical and emotional abuse by his black mother and developed a phobia against black women.

R9 Was a black mixed race male aged 19 who had been in care for 12 years. He lost contact with mum early in life and has never had contact with his black dad. During this time he had moved only twice before moving in semi-independence where he was at the time of the interview and had no period of time in residential care. He described himself as always being in and out of jail for different offences. He stopped attending school but didn't attend a PRU as '*they didn't get a chance to send me there'*. His mother was white UK and R9 used to see her for contact but this petered out. He didn't know any other family members from his mother's side. He identifies with both sides of his heritage but feels black, although there were times he wished he was

white because of the way he saw they got treated. His Aunt took him to Jamaica on one occasion and he recalls feeling proud of his heritage. When stopped by the Police and asked to state his ethnicity he says he tells them he is black but wonders why he does this as he is mixed.

R10 Was a black Caribbean male aged 19 who had been in care for 12 years. R10 describes himself as black British Caribbean and both his parents are Jamaican. He is in contact with his father. During that time he moved carers only twice and had no experience of residential care. He had behavioural issues at school and would fly into a rage at the mention of his mother and found it difficult that everyone knew he was in care. He coined the term 'nine to fivers' to describe foster carers and social workers who he describes as being primarily motivated by money.

The professional interviewees comprised 5 (n.5) black and dual heritage social work professionals all of whom are qualified and registered social workers who had a minimum of one year's experience working with black and dual heritage looked after young people.

Findings will be presented thematically, major and subordinate, using direct quotes from respondents to illustrate the themes. Where quotes are used this will be done through using individuals identifier code and, if a young person, their gender and whether they are black or dual heritage. Quotes have been drawn from all respondents rather than a select few and quotes used are those that best illustrate the views of the whole sample and/or make an additional worthwhile contribution to the research questions. Deviant and outlier quotes are also included throughout.

Three (3) major themes were generated from the interpretative analysis. Each major theme has a number of related subordinate themes. It should be noted that findings from the social worker sample are presented together with those of the young people to facilitate comparison of different perspectives. Findings are presented without reference to the literature as to do so could dilute the reported experience further suppressing the voices of those marginalised in dominant discourse (Smith et al, 2009). The main interpretation of the data will be contained in the discussion chapter

(Chapter five) and will describe further how the findings relate to the research literature on this topic.

Data analysis generated 3 major themes and 7 subthemes, which describe the experiences and views of the looked after respondents and the social workers.

The three major themes identified were:

- Emotional (Un)Availability
- Ethnicity
- Surviving School

Fig1: Thematic map showing the three major themes
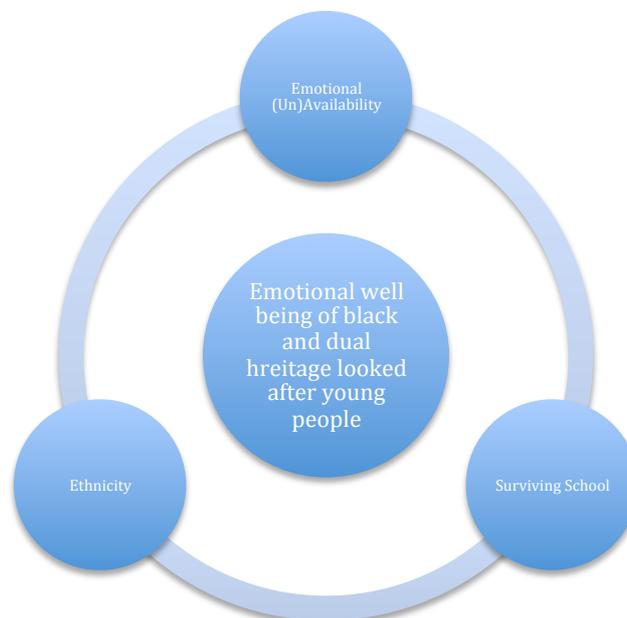
4.2: Development of themes

The data was organised, analysed and processed according to the principles of IPA and followed a number of stages as described in Chapter 3. The researcher was interested in the emotional wellbeing of black and dual heritage looked after young people. This interest grew out of past professional experiences and the literature, which in turn informed the topic guide. 'Surviving School' and 'Ethnicity' formed categories in the topic guide that struck a chord with the young people, while 'Emotional Unavailability' emerged from the data as a major theme. Seven sub themes were also identified two of which emerged from the data: 'nine to fivers' and 'stigma and labelling'. The other sub-themes were: 'emotions', 'feeling isolated', 'social worker qualities', 'identity' and 'behaviour and exclusions'. The cluster of major and subthemes identified from the looked after young people then informed the questions for the professional group - adapted to suit their perspective.

4.3: Theme 1: Emotional (Un)Availability

4.3.1: Description of Theme

A sense of isolation and looked after participants' own emotional wellbeing are inextricably linked. Participants' attributed this isolation to the emotional unavailability of their main carers, and to a lesser extent, social workers, that convey an unfeeling and emotionally unresponsive position towards them as looked after young people. Clear messages were received that carers need to move beyond solely meeting looked after young people's material needs to one that involve a genuine display of emotion and affection for them.

Eight of the ten looked after respondents (8/10) gave vivid accounts of their care experiences where they felt that the care they received was emotionally barren. This was a particularly strong theme and emerged often for most respondents irrespective of the topic under discussion. This held good irrespective of the ethnic background of the carers.

"Adopted parents gave us love but, because we were not their children, they never treated us like we were theirs. We were strangers living in their house. No genuine affection." (R4, Male, dual-heritage)

Figure 2: Thematic map showing major theme 1 and corresponding subthemes
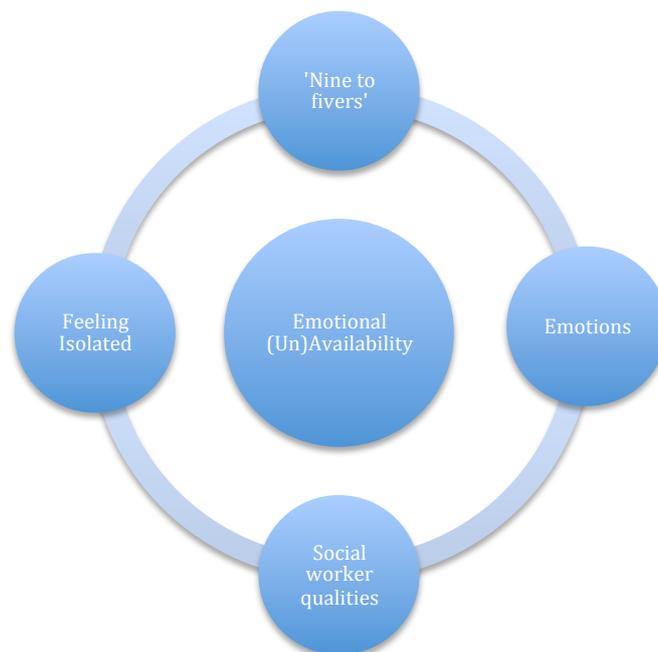
4.4: Emotions

Attention to the emotional needs of a young person is an often-neglected part of being looked after but an aspect of that experience that goes the heart of the matter where emotional wellbeing is concerned. Looked after respondents had a lot to say about

this aspect of their experiences and it overlaps with other categories so should not be read in isolation. The views of the social workers are presented here as these may help to contextualise the issue.

One worker, clearly aware of a gap between ensuring a child's basic needs are met, and his/her emotional needs being addressed ascribes this omission to systemic failure:

"As social workers we do concentrate on the practical side of care and a lot of things get missed, and then five years down the line everyone is like ohhh it's all kicking off for the young person. It's a systemic thing that needs to change." (SW01, Female, black Caribbean)

Other workers were in broad agreement with that sentiment and spoke of trying to engage with young people on her caseload emotionally, before eventually referring the work elsewhere. One worker thought the answer lay in additional training for social workers:

"So it's training on a practical level for us professionals. Managers are always telling me 'we have to be creative trying to engage young men as it doesn't always work face to face,' so we have a discussion while doing something else. Some of these young men need counselling and I've made referrals to therapeutic services. They've gone but it never lasts." (SW02, Female, black Caribbean)

Social workers disagreed about the place of specialist services in meeting the emotional needs of black and dual heritage looked after children. A few said no to referral unless the young people exhibited severe symptoms. The feeling was that there is much workers can do in their everyday interactions with looked after children to make a difference. The worker with care experience summed it up thus:

"People [social workers, carers and policy makers] don't put enough emphasis on the emotional damage about separation and loss. These kids leave care and can't move forward. I think black children need therapeutic input from day one, from the day they go into care. Social workers and foster carers need to be trained in a way that they are constantly working in a therapeutic way. I don't mean the kids are sent to therapy but in your everyday interactions you need to be using therapeutic talk." (SW03, Female, black Caribbean)

For the young people themselves there can be a heavy price to pay where professionals neglect the emotional component to being in care. The looked after respondents reported a range of symptoms suffered as a result of a neglect of their emotional wellbeing:

"I started drinking and smoking and attended therapy." (R3, Female, dual-heritage)

"I had feelings of anger due to my circumstances. If you haven't had a stable upbringing it's very hard to be stable yourself." (R2, Male, black Caribbean)

"Being in care messes with my emotions. I've been around carers and they are horrible –they would put their hands on you – not in that kind of way – but would hit you. I've been with carers who would abuse you, that's why I'm glad I moved back to xxx. They all say the right things and put a show on in front of social workers saying ohh I'm this kind of person and I'm that, but when they actually get the kid it's a different story." (R7, Male, dual-heritage)

Emotional unavailability, isolation and respondent's own emotional wellbeing are inextricably linked in the looked after respondents narratives. Many young people expressed feelings about their carers needing to move beyond mere caring in the sense

of meeting basic needs to a definition that involved a genuine show of emotion and affection. This respondent was particularly eloquent in her message:

"They wouldn't hold back their emotions with their own child. Most foster carers didn't see the similarities between a foster kid and their own kid. Many foster carers stay with what they were taught [by social services] and not what they learn through experience. 'Care' is a bullshit word. I'm not saying foster carers should love foster kids because some of us are shits we do horrible things, but at least like us! Caring isn't the right way to approach kids you can care about anything. Teachers care about you from 9-3 after that they don't care. You need to teach the foster carers to have real emotions towards these kids." (R1, Female, dual heritage)

The lack of emotion expressed by some carers has implications for the development of young people. This fact was not lost on the sample interviewed:

"They say foster carers are not meant to be emotionally attached to the child. Bullshit. You can't have a child and not be attached to them. That's why many kids in care are so fucked up, they lose touch with their emotions. You don't feel things; you don't feel happy, you don't cry. For me it's proper weird. I haven't cried for 10 years. When I see people crying over a death I say 'why are you crying?' and then I say to myself I'm pretty fucked up. A good friend of mine died recently, I'd known him since he was a child and I couldn't cry. I was at the funeral just standing there and I couldn't feel anything." (R1, Female, dual-heritage)

At least one looked after respondent implicated social services as advising foster carers not to get emotionally involved with foster children ostensibly to reduce further damage when the child needs to move again. However, the cost of emotionally barren care on the emotional development of the child is a heavy price to pay for some of the respondents:

"I think social workers need to teach foster carers what it's like to be a child in care. They need to hear from kids in care and realise it's not fun. A lot of kids come from bad places and situations – that's where social services are messing up kids in care saying carers they shouldn't be emotionally attached. If the reason for this is to protect children then they should know better what kind of people they have looking after children. No emotion is like a brick wall. They tell us we will be loved and cared for in a foster family so you go into a placement thinking they will care for you and once you're in the home you can be in your room for three days and they don't check. It's like I'm meant to come to you with open arms but you stand there with folded arms. Social services should do proper checks to make sure every one looking after children is safe and don't abuse the kids and allow them to be emotionally available. I don't mean every child wants a hug but you do need someone to talk to at some point in time. For me things like having a boyfriend I had no one to talk to. Every child needs guidance every child needs a parent figure to talk to and most kids in care don't have that." (R1, Female dual-heritage)

Another looked after respondent said:

"I craved love – they never used to give me it. They used to only highlight my bad failures. So when I was around other people's mums they used to love me – they used to treat me so nice and treat me like their son, and when I went home I was like 'what's going on?' Those small little things can make a big difference in a young person's life. At the time I didn't realise but looking back I realise what was going on." (R4, Male, dual–heritage)

Another looked after respondent hints at the complexity of matching. This respondent, who only had black social workers, thought it important that her worker reflected her ethnicity and yet:

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"All were black. I asked and said I don't want African social workers, but I would have a have white foster carer." (R6, Female, black Caribbean)

Picking and choosing the ethnic background of the carer was accommodated by social workers but was an area that posed challenges for them:

"I always try to match. A mixed-race child seeing themselves as black is fine. We should listen to how a child identifies itself. Preferences for certain ethnicities by the young people are accommodated. I try to hear their voices."(SW05, Female, black Caribbean)

4.5: Feeling isolated

This sub theme represented a core feeling from most of the looked after respondents and is linked to the above theme of motivation by reward in that being excluded within a family home, regardless of numbers of people in the house, left young people isolated. Where birth family ties were severed and when social workers were only expected to visit every six weeks, if the foster family excluded them they were effectively on their own. As a result 'feeling isolated and alone' featured greatly in the responses given by approximately two thirds of the looked after respondents. The majority of young people comprehensively and categorically ruled out confiding in their main carer if they were feeling down emotionally. Interestingly, they all included their social worker in the list of people they would not talk to. One young dual heritage female who had been in care for 7 years said throughout her care career she had no one to confide in and felt isolated and on her own for most of that time:

"If I got down in care I would tell no one. Foster carers don't have time to talk to you, they are not interested." (R1, Female, dual heritage)

She continued:

"My first foster carer – she didn't actually talk to us - there was me and another girl, I think she was mixed race but I didn't find out where she came from. I don't know how you can look after a child and not talk to them? I think a lot of foster carers slip through the net and social services don't see what goes on and how isolated they make you feel. Once in care you feel isolated from friends and stuff as they go home and I go into this other person's home. I lied for a long time that I was in care." (R1, Female, dual heritage)

The above quote was typical of responses to this sub theme in that participants would lie about their looked after status (more on this sub theme later).

"Teenage problems they [carers] were no help whatsoever. I couldn't turn to them and say 'mum I'm in trouble'." (R4, Male, dual-heritage)

Other looked after respondents said they would talk to friends and that social workers were not an option as they would move on. One young black male who spent twelve years in care was very bitter about the quality of care received and described his carers as only in it for the money:

"If I was down I would talk to my older brother, it wouldn't be a social worker or foster carer. Both are nine to fivers." (R10, Male, black Caribbean)

Not all young people felt like this. One looked after respondent said he would talk to his foster carer because of the supportive nature of the family he was placed with, and another respondent described his carer as a:

"...lovely foster carer from Ghana who prepared me well for semi-independence." *(R4, Male, black Caribbean)*

4.6: Nine to Fivers

More than half of the looked after participants (n. 8/10) accused foster care workers of being motivated by financial reward. Two looked after participants described their carers as *'crap'*. It was apparent that looked after participants agreed that this theme related to carers who, (despite meeting their material needs for clothes, food and shelter), lacked emotional warmth, and didn't seem to care about them as individuals. participants cited as evidence for these perceptions differential treatment between them and other children in the household who were genuinely 'cared about' in the application of house rules, and of different standards and treatment, usually between the foster carers own children and themselves as fostered children.

"I wasn't allowed in the fridge and was definitely treated different from the foster carer's own kids. I got a T-shirt for my birthday present while her kids got parties and big presents." (R10, Male, black Caribbean)

This quote was repeated in various forms by almost all of the looked after respondents. One looked after respondent reported being hit by foster carers but this was rare and reported by only one looked after respondent. Being told that certain parts of the house were out of limits to them as fostered young people while other young people in the household had free access everywhere was common - for one looked after respondent this in itself was tantamount to abuse.

This unfair treatment reinforced feelings of not being wanted and of isolation and could potentially hold implications for long term mental health and emotional stability:

"It didn't feel homely. I left there because I couldn't use the front room as she banned me. I couldn't invite friends back as she didn't want people to know where she lived. I had a bathroom, which I couldn't use. She made it seem like she cared. One day she said 'I'm going on holiday and my daughter can't care for you, so you have to contact social services to take you - and you don't have to come back.' " (R6, Female, black Caribbean)

Most looked after respondents were cynical about foster carers being paid to do a job. All of the participants were aware that their carers were being paid for looking after them. Two of them separately termed foster carers who they believed were motivated solely by financial reward as 'nine to fivers'.

"Foster carers need to not see it as work - as a nine to five. They shouldn't look at a child and see money, the second you look at a kid and see dollar signs that's when it goes off." (R10, Male black Caribbean)

"To me they were strangers but I was living in their house."(R4, Male, dual-heritage)

Social workers also noticed a lack of care and genuine warmth on the part of some of the carers they work with and agreed with the looked after respondents on the issue of carers being motivated by financial reward:

"Three admin workers at work have left to become foster carers and are raking it in. They pay them too much money, they need to root out those who do it as a business, but I suppose children's homes are businesses too. If you have four kids you get nearly £4k per month to look after four children, which is a lot of money. I don't know what the answer is." (SW03, Female, black Caribbean)

One social worker, who is care experienced herself and so brings an additional perspective, was of the opinion that one possible answer is to place more young people in residential care:

"They're paid to do a job and sometimes the foster carers don't even care that the children can see that they don't care. I think children's homes are better because you know the staff is paid and you're not trying to be part of a family. I would say only about 50% of foster carers are committed. They can make loads of money if they have three kids and get £450 a week for each child. Have you seen some of the houses they live in? Jeeez!" (SW03, Female, black Caribbean)

(NB. Allowances for foster carers vary according to geography (for example in London rates are higher) and by the age and needs of the young person. £450.00 per week would be at the upper end of the scale.)

One of the two looked after respondents who had spent time in residential care agreed:

"There's nothing worse than feeling unloved and unwanted. In residential care even if staff didn't care we had each other. I saw some kids in foster care who had it harder than us." (R5, Male, Black Caribbean)

Social workers described grappling with ethical dilemmas in this regard. If informed of carers being cold and unresponsive, even hostile, they then have to balance whether it is worse for the young person involved to be moved (again) or have them stay in a potentially abusive environment. In one such case the worker quoted below made a formal complaint about the carer's suitability but was unsure about what, if any, action was taken. She said:

"I find a lot of carers are in it for the money, you can tell by certain things. Visit after visit certain things aren't done and the child tells you certain things. Where a foster child tells me of different treatment between them and the carers own children first I would challenge this as it might be down to perception, then I'll try and work on the situation between the child and the carer, but if it is true I would be moving that child on and I have done so in the past for that very reason. One child couldn't sit in the front room, the carer's daughter had a baby and the situation changed for the worse, it wasn't a supportive environment any more. One case I had I think social services were late with their payments to the foster carer and she was harassing the [looked after] girl as if she had anything to do with it, so I moved her." (SW04, Female, black Caribbean)

One dual heritage looked-after female blamed social services for teaching foster carers not to get emotionally involved. She believes carers regard their role as a nine to five job which they stick to without realising that young people like her in their care need more than being regarded as a 'job'. She said:

"The only foster carer who ignored everything Social Services said to her was my last foster carer because she never saw it as a 9-5 and treated me like I was one of her own kids. I was never with any foster carer for more than 1 year but was with her for 3 years." (R1, Female. dual-heritage)

On the same theme, the same participant stated:

"I think 95% are in it because they get paid very well. It's an easy way to get money so you don't have to go out to work. 5% do it cos they want to change a kid's life. I can always tell what a foster carer is like the minute I step in to their aura. They change the minute the social worker leaves. I have only ever had one good foster

carer, she bought me bedding and fridge and a cooker even though she wasn't paid to do it anymore. You can feel it when somebody actually genuinely cares – she still calls me to this day." (R1, Female, dual-heritage)

The question of carers being genuine is one shared by all looked after respondents. One participant relates here how looked after young people eventually develop strategies and tests to help them decide the motives of a carer:

"For example when my social worker told her [her foster carer] 'she likes to run away' she [the carer] said 'well you say she likes to run away but I don't know.' Most foster carers say ok what time should I call the police. I tested her, and she left a message on my phone saying she isn't going to call the police and I haven't got time to be running away from the police so when you're ready to come home you know where I am. After that I said to friends I'm going home as she is not going to give up... she held my corner and treated me like she treated the rest of her kids." (R1, Female, dual-heritage)

Additional examples given by looked after respondents of cold treatment was of food being locked away, not being trusted with a key to the house, carers not engaging with the young person and certain rooms being ruled out of bounds for them. One looked after respondent observed: "*Not everyone is meant to work with children and young people*" (R8, Male, black Caribbean).

Taking the discussion into another direction one looked after respondent commented on the ethnicity and culture of his carer in relation to their motivation by reward.

"I didn't know this about Jamaicans at the time but they are not exactly the most positive natured people. You make a mistake and it was like the most swear words… the woman was not compassionate – it was a paycheque for her and she would then

go on holiday to Muslim countries. Her daughter would come in to cover and kick us around, I never seen a more scary woman. They would get along but hated each other and everyone else in the house." (R2, Male, black Caribbean)

In addition to being motivated by reward, displaying cold unfeeling behaviours and treating their own children better most participants (7/10) also reported an imbalance between criticism, praise and encouragement. This was the case for all looked after respondents who reported being subject to excessive criticism and micro surveillance. This took the form of ongoing punishments for what they saw as minor infringements or for no reason at all:

"The one thing about being in care I remember is always getting told off" (R1, Female, dual-heritage)

"I would get told off about getting told off. I would be told off by my Jamaican foster carer for no reason" (R2, Male, black Caribbean)

"I was always getting told off - even by my own doctor!" (R3, Female, dual-heritage)

Looked after respondents reported a no-win situation in that their responses to this perceived unfair treatment involved running away and non-compliance which would land them in further trouble, which served only to justify the differential treatment.

4.7: Social Worker Qualities

Social worker qualities refer to participants experiences of the relationship with one of the key people in their life. There were mixed findings on social workers from the looked after respondents. They held firm views on what qualities make for a 'good' social worker and conversely what qualities make for a 'bad' social worker. Most began describing social workers by saying they would 'come and go'. This high

turnover of staff acted against developing genuine long-term relationships based on trust and understanding. Hence, many of these relationships were seen by the looked after respondents as merely reinforcing their feelings of isolation. Social workers occupy a unique position in the lives of looked after young people and ideally are well placed to provide support and an outlet for young people to rely on and even confide in, but instead workers were seen to be unreliable and untrustworthy.

"I had four social workers. Never got on with one of them. The last one didn't leave me alone - always calling my phone. Can't remember details about other social workers." (R9, Male, black Caribbean)

The above is both representative and unrepresentative of the sample in the sense that multiple changes of worker was the norm for all with one exception but deviant in the sense that, while most looked after respondents call for more contact as evidence that the worker cares, this participant interprets efforts at increased contact as an irritant. The looked after respondents below illustrate both sides of this issue:

"I had so many social workers they began to blur. They were awkward people not many stuck with me. At one time I was in a white area and had a white social worker and a white foster carer that was when I felt my blackness more. I had one don't know where from, but she was persistent in me doing education. Her religious beliefs wanted me to go to church, she couldn't relate to a black child." (R2, Male, black Caribbean)

And,

"Contact them more – social workers wait for the kid to contact them but they should call to see if they are ok, it would help with the isolation. They should support the kids more and back them up a bit more with things like school. Just remember every kid in care is not the same – we are similar but very different." (R1, Female, dual heritage)

Notions of what makes a bad social worker emerged:

"I had a terrible social worker a really horrible one. She was very judgemental. When I was trying to get my flat she said 'that's not allowed' because I would use it as a crack house. I asked for and got my social services file and most of it was judgemental. She was commenting on things she only heard about and didn't bother to ask me if they were true. I used to complain about her all the time. I complained and tried to remove her but because she had more power than me she was telling people she was trying to help me so I couldn't even get rid of her. I threatened to hit her, which got me into more trouble. Aghhh, I hated her so much the way she tried to judge me. I had her between the ages of 15 and 18. She had it fixed that I was a criminal and there was no chance of me changing her idea." (R4, Male, dual-heritage)

This was similar to the views of a number of other looked after respondents:

"I had two social workers Helen and Stuart. Stuart was the most patronising guy I ever met in my life. I don't know what it was with white guys and being patronising but he was fantastic at it. Helen was compassionate and dedicated to her job." (R2, Male, black Caribbean)

One looked after respondent thought the quality of social work input related to the age of the child:

"When young my first social worker went to Barbados and brought me back stuff. As you get older in care the social workers aren't bothered. You don't want to see them and they don't want to see you." (R1, Female, dual-heritage)

The social workers themselves were not always supportive of their colleagues' practice when working with black and dual heritage looked after children:

"I've had experiences of fellow social workers afraid to use the word 'black' and they have their own issues with not challenging certain things - young people pick up on that." (SW01, Female, black Caribbean)

Social work practice is based on anti-oppressive practice and social justice but workers are not immune from holding prejudiced views about groups in society. The following quote illustrates a black female worker getting to grips with working cross culturally:

"Even in social workers personal life they don't mix with other races which can affect their work. Don't forget professionals hold dodgy views about people and their views can be incorrect that's why I emphasise training. In my real life I don't mix with Chinese so my views about Chinese people are based on what is written on that paper." (SW02, Female, black Caribbean)

In support of this another worker made a similar point:

"Social work is a profession and social workers vary as to how much they care as well. Some people just don't care. They punch the clock and that's it. Teens say to me they can't bother with social workers as they feel oppressed. They say we don't say the right things and don't ask them for their views or we just put the wrong things down on paper about them so that when I get a new case they can't be bothered to even try - they are jaded." (SW04, Female, Black Caribbean)

Views from looked after respondents were remarkably similar to the perception of social workers:

"Social workers are nine to fivers - in it for the money. Social workers overlook stuff. There's stuff in my file I don't agree with and parts seem exaggerated. They put me under a SGO [Special Guardianship Order] I didn't understand what this was and it cost me later in life. If they had explained I wouldn't have agreed with it." (R10, male, black Caribbean)

Looked after respondents' views on social worker qualities were not all negative:

"There's good social workers who make things happen. There is one guy that if you are in trouble, he is the one you want. The bad ones come round and check all is ok to get their paycheques. I found the black social workers had more passion for the job. They try to connect with the black kids. I've never seen a white worker try to connect with me the way black workers do." (R10, Male, black Caribbean)

"My second social worker was a white man, he was good and the way he bonded… he would take us ice skating to make us feel comfortable to talk and that was building up trust – he stood out as the best social worker I've had and is now a manager. Doesn't matter what background a social worker is but they should take time and establish a bond and make the young person feel comfortable - don't just jump in.' (R7, Male, dual-heritage)

4.8: Theme 2: Ethnicity

Figure 3: Thematic map showing major theme 2 and corresponding subtheme
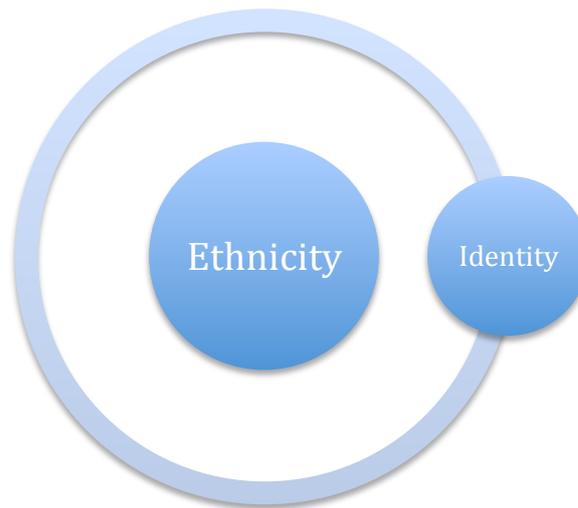
4.8.1: Description of Theme

This theme refers to how the young people self-defined in relation to others from the same or different ethnicity, racial and cultural background and in relation to their status as looked after young people.

4.9: Identity

Identity goes to the heart of every looked after child's experiences, arguably more so where they are black or dual heritage as they will be in a minority population within a minority population located within a wider society where their racial identity is demeaned and devalued. This theme centres on how far the young people felt their ethnic background and identity were considered, positively promoted and taken into account throughout their care career.

"My social worker tried to say that I don't know my identity and to be honest I don't. All I know about my ethnicity is when I met my dad and he told us but I don't know who my real parents are and what they're about. They can call me mixed race as I am. I never used to look at it but when I see people with all these family pictures they got their whole life on the wall…I've only ever seen one picture of me when I was younger and only seen one picture of my mum. I don't even know what my mum looks like. I know what her name is. My sister traced her but she didn't want to know. I know she has another two kids."(R4, Male, dual-heritage)

In a similar vein another looked after respondent said:

"When people asked me what ethnicity I am for a while I didn't even know! I had regular contact with my mum who would come and see me twice a week. Me and mum would talk about race and racism [his mum was mixed race]. Certain situations she would tell me about. I went through a process I said if my dad's, full black and mum half Barbadian and half white then the majority of me is black. And if you look at a picture of my Nan's family they look like a picture of Coronation Street - but growing up I would say I'm English." (R5, Male, black Caribbean)

The importance of identity work to these young people cannot be overstated: *"No one spoke about identity work – it's good to find out where you're from. What is this country called Antigua? No mentoring in this sense."* (R2, male, black Caribbean). The following looked after participant was on the extreme edge of what can happen if identity is not attended to. His birth father was Guyanese and his African American mother abused him. As a result he developed a hatred of black women. He said he associated black with negativity:

"I had a problem with black women due to being abused by my mother but the care home gave me black females for key workers anyway. In my second home it was all black women but I came to terms with this. My main friends were white. For a while I wanted to be white. I didn't know where I belonged – no identity. Basically, I was dumped at social services that was when my dad said 'I'm not your dad."(R8, Male, black African)

Attempts at helping participants to develop a sense of identity was attempted in an ad hoc fashion; it and often seemed to rely on individual commitment by a lone carer or social worker. This was not always well received or effective:

"I think they [social services] did some identity work with me by putting me with a load of black people. But all my friends were white. It made me get into a load of things I shouldn't have got into to. We used to do things for black history month and my aunty [who was black] got me into the food. My mum's mum used to tell me about getting here on the boat." (R3, Female, Dual-heritage).

Two looked after respondents mentioned wishing they were white. This disconnect between who they are and who they wish to be can potentially lead to more serious psychiatric issues.

"I don't have many white friends. There were times I wished I was white because of the way I saw white people living. Racial matching depends on child's age. But I don't think it even matters as anyone can provide the care needed, it depends on the child as everyone is different"(R9, Male, dual heritage)

Responses from social workers show they are aware of the needs of looked after children and young people on identity issues:

Black children have different needs as they are in a minority, they often feel like they don't fit in, they live in a racist society so they have to manage that."(SW04, Female, black Caribbean)

"Black looked after children have different needs because a lot of the time they can be confused in terms of their identity especially mixed race children - some of them. They can identify with black parents or white parents and you can add to the mix the fact that many are going through adolescence. It comes out in terms of pushing boundaries and not being sure of their future. Some feel being hard on the street is the way to go but that pertains to the black looked after kids also. In this area it is more about looking hard as there is a lot of gang involvement." (SW04, Female, black Caribbean)

Transracial placements have been around for decades and have attracted controversy almost as long. Most respondents favour same race matching as it appears to others that they are one family even where the carers are not emotionally available.

"I was moved to Surrey Quays with a white foster carer with her spoilt grandson and another foster kid - it was all right but awkward. She was very nice but as a young kid if you are the only black kid in the family surrounded by white it is a bit awkward so I didn't feel comfortable there and my social worker was white as well. I didn't feel comfortable. I stayed there a couple months. Food shelter, warmth was there but no connection – it was kinda weird for me as I couldn't respond to a situation where I was like hold up! I lived in the black community, I'm now in a white community and had no choice in the matter. The carer didn't want to acknowledge the racial difference." (R2, Male, black Caribbean)

That feeling of awkwardness as a result of being transracially placed appeared often in narratives of the looked after respondents:

"When you have a different colour skin and you are out with a white family walking down the street you're going to have people looking at you thinking 'what's he doing with a white family?' and it makes you feel uncomfortable. The family wouldn't feel it as they think it's normal but you would feel it definitely. I've always said that kids should be placed with their own race because there are different needs to be met. 'Cos white people and black people have different ways of growing children – different discipline."(R7, Male, dual-heritage)

"People would stare when we went out as a group as it was Indian mother, Scottish father and us black kids."(R4, Male, dual Heritage)

A dual heritage participant further illustrated the complex nature of identity for young people growing up in substitute care.

"I would describe myself as being both parts of my cultures. My black side is more dominant because my [white] dad is the only person I met from his side. His relatives are not interested in meeting me. Now it's just me and my brother, which is my black side. I have a good balance. I was more towards the white side when in care and I had only white friends. My foster carer who is Jamaican made me realise both sides are important by doing her family tree and she made all three of us get involved with this. She paid for us to search our family tree – it was good for me so I could see both sides. It made me more interested in how my mum grew up in Jamaica. People say to me you look more white and ask 'is your mum white?' My granddad is a knight. My dad has a family coat of arms but I'm not interested as they never wanted to know me."(R1, Female, dual heritage)

Looked after respondents in the main appreciated being listened to by social workers about the quality of care they receive and about where they might be placed and who with? *"If a person asks for particular type of family we do try to meet the request as we don't want them running away but in an emergency this can be difficult."(SW01, Female, black Caribbean)*

"It's not like the colour of your skin makes much difference but it's the heritage, the culture of people around you that shapes you. I was raised with black people most of my life so I wasn't being racist or anything but it was like wow! All white. When you are older you can live with a white foster carer as a black child but not at that age [primary school age]. There was no other black kid in xxx and I felt like a Martian. But they [social services] listened to me and moved me to a black family in a more mixed area" (R2, Male, black Caribbean)

Differences in ethnicities often rendered a simplistic black/white duality redundant. Within Caribbean Islands there are differences that can and do affect parenting styles as indicated by the following respondents:

"I was with a Jamaican and another time with Barbadian carers. The Bajan hurt my head as she couldn't care less. When cussing she would cuss out Jamaicans saying Jamaicans are this and Jamaicans are that."(R10, Male, black Caribbean - Jamaican).

"I was placed with a Nigerian family - this didn't last. The difference in parenting was too much, too strict. This lasted only three days. I prefer white carers to African carers, the only downside is explaining to people why your mum is white." (R6, Female, black Caribbean)

"A lot of it is to do with ethnic background. My mum's Jamaican and dad is white. A lot of the time I was put with African foster carers but the food and home smells are different. I always felt like I was being put with people with different backgrounds to me and they wonder why my placements never worked. I have nothing against Africans. My social workers asked me where I wanted to live and I always said match me up properly and then it could work. They would say 'this is the next available placement off you go'. I could understand if it was an emergency placement but my first placement was an emergency and they placed me and just left me there."(R1, Female, dual-heritage)

Continuing on this theme a number of looked after respondents quickly realised that a carer having a black skin was no guarantee of having their emotional needs met:

"With the Jamaican family, I felt like I belonged in a racial sense, but the way they cussed people… it was like I was getting attacked – she had issues with me. I remember a placement I went to for a short while and I was loving it but I had to leave as she had too many kids. She was very compassionate and loving. She was white – she puts her time into her kids. I prefer the foster carers where their hearts are in it. Black kids [in care] aren't looking for a black father or mother, they're looking for a mother and a father. A kid isn't racist they are accepting. Love is enough. Love is the thing, if you have that you have it all. As long as there's love there's no one you can't reach."(R2, Male, black Caribbean)

Matching social worker with ethnicity of a looked after child was another aspect to the matching debate. One worker put it bluntly: *"Black children should be matched with black workers."(SW05, Female, black Caribbean)*. Others were more cautious:

"Being black offers me an opportunity to connect with black young people but some young people don't want to engage and just want to get money, finance and so on. I have a lot of white children on my caseload who engage well with me too. Personality

has a lot to do with it, sometimes the relationship doesn't gel and sometimes it gels I will always try but there may be a barrier, some people don't like me - I'm fair but firm." (SW04, Female, black Caribbean)

Social workers in the main had the discretion whether to match placements or not. In terms of employer practice guidance none of the social workers interviewed were aware of any policy that offered them guidance in this. This left the decision to match or not down to their individual politics: *"Any placement matching is social worker led. I can't remember if there is anything that specifically asks for ethnicity of the carer on the form, I think I just put it on there. I'm not 100% sure whether this borough has any specific policies regarding the care of black children. There may be but I don't know."(SW01, Female, black Caribbean).*

All workers supported ethnic matching citing matching on other grounds (gender, for example) but voiced concerns over deskilling and limiting learning opportunities for others:

"Social workers matched with black kids? I'm not matched in my role now but sometimes it may be good to match as it happens in gender. Ethically I'm not against it but sometimes it can broaden people's experiences working with a different cultural group so for a young white man who's never worked with black workers it might be good experience on both sides." (SW02 Female, black Caribbean)

Some social workers have made their mind up on same race placements, *"I don't see how transracial placements can work. They [white carers] don't know how to protect those kids - love isn't enough." (SW03, Female, dual heritage).* Others were more equivocal:

"My views on transracial placement have evolved. I think it is best for a child to be matched where possible and initially I would try to do that. However, I understand numbers are low in certain ethnic carer groups and I would place a child with a different ethnic group from themselves so long as the carers educated themselves about that child's cultural needs. I would place an African child with an English family as long as there is a knowledge base about Africans that was good. They can't give a child all life experiences of being an African child but I would rather place a child with a family rather than have them continue in the care system."(SW02, Female, black Caribbean)

All of the social workers thought it best that black and dual heritage young people were matched in their placements. But a number of workers and looked after dual heritage young people made the point that decisions on where to place dual heritage youngsters should still be made carefully. In their responses dual heritage participants were clearly against workers assuming they were black and preferred to be asked and listened to. But this area is fraught with complexity as illustrated by the respondents below:

"We had a choice of going to a white family or black but most of my family is black I can't find of the white side of my family, I can't find my Nan. The only person I can find is my mum and my granddad from that side but I don't talk to my granddad cause he's a little bit racist so I don't associate myself with him. Personally I'm glad I was placed with a black family. That's how I look at it cos when you got black in you you got special needs that should be catered to as obviously a white won't really know how to sort it out. The social worker would have made the choice based on my needs."(R7, Male, dual-heritage)

"I felt it did make a difference and I support ethnic matching. I wasn't matched ethnically but should have been. Being mixed race in care is confusing, because you have black in you, you are treated as –race black. I would have liked to have been

placed with a mixed-race foster carer to see what it was like. They always put me with black carer - why assume mixed children to be black?" (R1, Female, dual heritage)

"It's interesting as when I was eight I wanted to go with a white family but when I was aged around fourteen I identified more with my black side so you have to be careful in this area."(SW03, Female, dual heritage)

For the following four looked after dual heritage respondents' identities were imposed by authority figures:

"I remember one time I got arrested I was with my mum and the Police Officer said to me what ethnicity are you? And I said I'm English and he said 'No you're not. You're not English you're Black'. I was like… I didn't know what to say and my mum stepped in. But from that I was like maybe I'm not English then so that's when I stopped saying that."(R5, Male, black Caribbean)

"I'm proud of identifying as a black Caribbean. When the Police stopped me they never said oh here's a white boy they always said black Caribbean so I took it from there. If you're classing me as a black person I must be a black person innit:"(R7, Male, dual heritage)

"Whenever I get stopped by the Police they say I'm black but sometimes I wonder why am I black? I'm mixed, but I class myself as black. I'm mixed race but … I'm both innit. It's not really just because Police say I'm black it's because I've been around black people all my life I've always been in a Caribbean household. I don't really have many white friends either, I may have one or two."(R9, Male, black Caribbean)

"Aunt Hazel used to say 'you know you're a black girl and not one of these white girls running around the street' and I used to say 'yes but Aunty I do actually have white in me' and she would say 'if you look at the colour of your skin you're not white you're brown'. I know I'm very well tanned and you can't say that to me. You'll find with mixed race people they will chose one or the other depends on their upbringing. I will come across as a white person even though I like black culture. My friends call me bounty bar, black on outside white inside and I am not insulted by this. Generally my friends are all white. I have a black couple of friends who class themselves as bounty, and this is not a problem at all for me." (R3, Female, dual heritage)

Dual heritage looked after children often have an additional hurdle to overcome in finding their identity as often their white mothers bring them up before entering care. These formative years are crucial to the formation of an identity. Adolescence can be a time for a reworking of that identity which isn't always a smooth process, especially for children in care:

"I'm white and black Caribbean. I always say this. If someone calls me mixed race I don't take it offense. The way I see it I'm both but the Caribbean stands out more so I don't say white and black British but white and black Caribbean. It is an important part of my identity. I identify so strongly with the Caribbean as I've always lived with a black family and my dad was black from Jamaica. That's where my nan and the rest of my family are from start of care. I've been to Jamaica 7 times and I've been to St. Lucia so I'm well equipped with the Caribbean. I love Jamaica and when I reach the age of 50 that's where I'll go next."(R7, Male, dual heritage)

Discretion on where to place children is reduced significantly where the previous placement has broken down abruptly or where a child enters care for the first time on an emergency placement, but even here workers can plan towards a more permanent placement if they so choose.

"My views are if you placed a Caribbean child and the foster carer has no experience of that child's background either in their personal experiences or knowledge then that's where the placement might not be in the child's best interests. Building self-esteem of who they are is important and if the carers are not able to help them, for example, show them how they handle the effects of racism, that's my only difficulty with children not being matched. If you haven't walked in their shoes how do you relay that experience and knowledge to a child? How to work through prejudice and racism?"(SW02, Female, black Caribbean)

On the theme of participation and choice in placements based on concepts of ethnicity the following quotes illustrate the complexity of this and the limits of choice:

"Young people may express a preference of the ethnicity of the carer. In some cases we met their preference in some we couldn't. If they said they didn't want to go to particular foster carer because of their colour I would question this especially if they are from the same ethnic background. I would be curious to know why they are not comfortable with their own identity. I know some social workers think it is important and that we should do our best to match or find the next best fit. For me, it is a training issue. Those seeking to adopt and foster should be trained in these matters."
(SW02, black, Caribbean)

One looked after respondent said:

"My social Workers have all been black. I was asked about my preference and I said I didn't want them to be African. I didn't mind having a white foster carer because of the way they see children and treat children. I said I'd rather have a white foster carer as we can talk but the downside to this is explaining why my mum is white"(F6, Female, black Caribbean)

Other workers responding on the same theme said:

"I had a black female who didn't want any black carers because they were too strict and she felt she could dominate white carers so I wouldn't listen to her views in this case. Where a child requests a white carer because of internalising racism I would want to prove them wrong by putting them with a good black carer."(SW04, black Caribbean)

"You try to find a match. I don't know if it's written in a policy or if it is a personal rule. If there is no other placement you want them placed where they will be loved and supported because sometimes there is no guarantee even with a match that they will support their needs. With Mixed race children you try to match them with at least one half of their identity but hopefully you know the child well enough to make an informed match. You can use the Frasier competence on age but this depends on their best interest. If I have a carer that didn't do what they were meant to do but was a match I wouldn't put the young person there so matching doesn't overrule quality." (SW04, black Caribbean)

Carers' ability to meet basic needs is a criterion used by black workers when placing black and dual heritage children. At times black workers act as advocates for black and dual heritage children in this regard:

"I've stepped in to help foster carers with grooming on hair food and stuff like that when they have taken a transracially placed child, as I noticed they weren't being looked after properly. I've had battles about that. In one particular borough because there wasn't any provision for them I felt they didn't see it as an issue so it had to be kept being escalated until they saw it as an issue."(SW01, Female, black Caribbean)

"Hair care and skin care was not taken into account and the white social worker didn't notice the child's distress."(SW05, Female, black Caribbean).

There emerged a degree of cynicism on the part of the workers on the issue of system support for doing identity work. This was in accord with looked after respondents' views:

"Identity is important. Without identity who are you? The system pays lip service to these things but it doesn't take these things seriously. To me the system is like a film, it says we do this and we do that - no you don't do that, you may get individual people in the system who does it but not as part of a systemic whole." (SW03, Female, black Caribbean)

Indeed all of the social workers viewed the system they operate in as actively working against doing quality work with black looked after children: *"The whole system needs a re-boot from the top to the bottom. There's too much pressure on workers, unmanageably high caseloads and less time to do quality work. We're just trying to avoid burnout and experienced workers are leaving."(SW04, Female, black Caribbean)*

"I think the care system doesn't care. People in the system sometimes do, but the system doesn't. It wasn't set up to care. It was set up to provide shelter and 'care for' not 'care about'. Most staff don't care… I don't think they even know what identity means." (SW03, Female, black Caribbean)

Workers also spoke of adapting existing prescriptive forms to include issues they felt needed attention illustrating the common response that work with black children on identity is a matter for individual discretion on the part of the worker:

We do pathway plans and there is a section dealing with identity and you just broaden it out to include ethnic identity in terms of self-esteem and how they identify

themselves within their own family as some of them are not connected to their family.
I try to explore all of these areas including sexuality, ethnic group and faith. I do this
by engaging in discussions with that particular young person. It depends on how
much they are willing to reveal and open up around identity."(SW02, Female black
Caribbean).

4.10: Theme 3: Surviving Schooling

Figure 4: Thematic map showing major theme 3 and corresponding subthemes
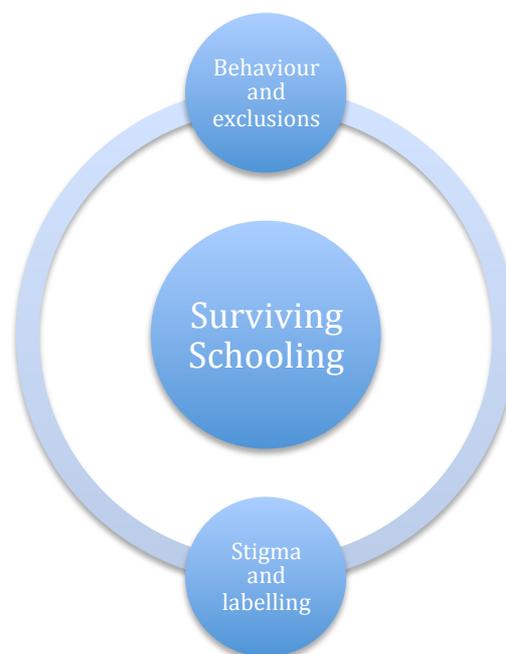
4.10.1 Description of Theme

This theme refers to the experiences the participants had in their schooling. The entire sample of looked after young people reported being labelled as having behavioural problems, even if they didn't previously have this problem. Most respondents reported eventually attending alternative schooling provision to the mainstream

because of their behaviour. A strong sense of injustice permeated the responses, reflecting the view that they could not escape other people's judgements and biases against their identity as looked after young people. Teachers' attitudes and responses were described as ranging from pity, to assuming pupils were of low intellect and presented a behavioural threat. Such assaults on their psychological wellbeing were reported as emanating from both teachers and peers and were often compounded by actions from insensitive carers and social workers. Stigma and labelling recurred as an issue across all themes but was a particularly strong theme in the context of schooling. Reactions and responses to this invariably led to a deterioration of behaviour through the school years and on to exclusion from school.

4.11: Behaviour and exclusions

A common response to perceived bias, low expectations and insensitive teachers, compounded by bullying or taunts from peers was violence and misbehaviour. Without exception all of the looked after respondents reported having behavioural issues at school regardless of the reason they entered care. These issues escalated on entering secondary school and involved indefinite and permanent exclusions for most. It also involved referral to child and adolescent mental health services and the offer of therapy, and in two severe cases in-patient services and medication. This had a cost for the young people involved in terms of emotional distress and further disruption to their education:

"I went to school in xxx. I got excluded many times. In years seven and eight I was a typical rude boy and got into little bits of trouble. I didn't come out of my shell until year 9 and followed older kids and went through a phase where I was never at home. I used to hate being at home because it was so strict and non-homely - and disappear for weeks. I used to create havoc. I went to a PRU for six months but went back and finished my GCSEs, didn't get much. In years ten and eleven I went off the rails."(R4, Male, dual-heritage)

"I was excluded because I had an attitude and was rude and teachers didn't like my piercings. I went to a PRU for 6 weeks for vandalism cos I wrote on the wall and had a couple of fights. The centre was the worst 6 weeks of my life. I finished the work in 30 minutes. I am now in the 6th form. I began to mentor younger kids at [a centre for excluded children] by telling them to hold their tongue."(R6, Female, black Caribbean)

Pupil Referral Units (PRU) educate young people who are excluded, sick or otherwise unable to attend a mainstream school. Most of the looked after respondents attended a PRU at some stage of their schooling. The Local Education Authority has a legal duty to provide education for children of compulsory school age and putting children in the PRU is one of the ways they seek to comply with this requirement. PRUs have a reputation as 'sin bins' for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

A care experienced social worker put it thus:

"Most of the looked after children get kicked out of school and go to PRUs. Because they have had quite difficult things to deal with… if you are not with your parents or have been abused, that is the most important thing to you, not whether one and one equals two."(SW03, Female, dual heritage)

A looked after participant hinted at the relationship between his teachers and himself:

"Everyone at school knew I was in care, I didn't care, I didn't try to keep it secret. In Year 7 I was good. The older I got the more trouble I got into, so by year 10 I missed half the year. I really had a bad temper in primary school. In secondary school I got away with a lot more. They kicked me out once, as I was rude to a deputy head. The

most they did was ring the carers but all my teachers hated me."(R3, Female, dual heritage)

The same looked after respondent said:

*"I went into residential care after I was excluded. I hated it there and stayed for about 3 weeks, then went back to the foster care. But my behaviour stayed the same and got worse and worse. I started drinking and smoking every day. I went to family therapy at the Maudsley [*Psychiatric*] Hospital, three of us went to talk about things. My behaviour didn't change and I stopped going to school."(R3, Female, dual heritage).*

Two looked after respondents had spent virtually all of their care careers in residential care (R8 and R5 both black males). One entered care for behavioural problems as his parents couldn't cope with his violence against his sister and the other entered care as a result of abuse but developed severe behavioural problems once there.

"I would stand and confront staff and shout at them. They would put me down [using restraint techniques] a number of times. I had therapy after I broke down and was admitted [to the Maudsley Hospital] for two days on medication. They kept asking 'how does it feel?"(R8, Male, black Caribbean)

"I didn't used to take my friends from school home as I didn't want them to know my situation. They knew that my mum was white and if I took them there they would say I thought your mum was white, and I didn't want to get into that. Primary school was good. I went to xxx secondary school, which started off ok, but towards the end I started getting into trouble and stopped going. I got kicked out of lessons for messing around. I didn't go to a PRU, as I wasn't permanently kicked out. They didn't get a chance. So I didn't get any qualifications."(R9, Male, dual heritage)

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One looked after respondent described how he would fly into a temper when people mentioned his mother. This resulted in a number of exclusions. Another participant was referred to the Maudsley Hospital for therapy for conduct disorder. He said he didn't like the adults in his school and was confrontational and suffered a breakdown and like the participant above was put on medication. By his admission he was aggressive and violent at school. He attended a PRU and hoped to return to mainstream school but social workers told the school about his background of abuse and treatment and the school refused to have him back.

"Primary school was okay. Secondary school years seven and eight were ok too. In year nine I felt like teachers were ganging up on me. I like to tell jokes and can't keep still and teachers didn't like me in their class. I was excluded temporarily quite a few times then permanently excluded at the end of year nine. Went to a PRU for 2 years and got qualifications in maths and English and National in desktop publishing, I went to college for a little while but the course was harder than I thought, more in-depth – this wasn't for me. I could have got help but I didn't used to talk up."(R7, Male, black Caribbean)

Only one of the looked after respondents had what he described as a positive school experience even though it was punctuated by periods of exclusion:

"I went to xxx all the way through secondary school. I got excluded a few times for silly things. It's difficult to deal with being in care at school because a lot of people in the school knew your business. I didn't try to hide it, it was just one of those things. When they would discuss my mum I would lose my temper it wouldn't matter if they talked about my mum positively. The school dealt with me beautifully, they even helped me find out what I was good at. I attended the isolation unit in school. They put me on a course at the end of schooling. They put me on a music production course, which was before I knew my dad was a producer too. Parents evening wasn't

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really a big deal, my foster carer would come and everyone knew they were my foster carer."(R10, Male, black Caribbean)

4.12: Stigma and Labelling

The preconceptions of others regarding children in care exert an effect on those children. Many looked after respondents reported how they hated being known as a looked-after child as this would invite feelings of pity or generalisations that they were 'trouble'. Almost all of the looked after respondents, bar one, hid the fact they were looked after to avoid stigma and labelling. Some reacted violently when the issue was raised by peers. Insensitive teachers and social workers would add to the distress of looked after respondents with careless talk, sloppy handling of documentation or otherwise unthinking actions that highlighted their status. Looked after respondents reported being in a constant state of anxiety over being found out in this way.

"I never wanted to tell anyone I was in care as they would say you're not with your mum and that would hurt. So I never told anyone for fear of taking the mick. Most teachers knew, but I never really spoke to them about being in care. It had an effect on me from a young person it makes your head messed up cos you're all over the place. If I was with my proper family I would be able to concentrate more. It's an emotional thing."(R7, Male dual-heritage)

"Yes when they find out that you are in care they judge you as being bad. So I lied about being in care. I lied for a long time. Not a lot of people understand what's it like being in care, they are very naïve, they feel you have fucked up. It's hard, you end up shutting off to everything – almost like you don't have emotions."(R1, Female, dual-heritage)

"Avoided this by not telling anyone I was in care."(R7, Male, dual heritage)

"Didn't tell anyone I was in care, kept it secret throughout secondary school. Parents evening was awkward, I told people my carer was my Aunt."(R9, Male, dual heritage)

"Everywhere I went I was bullied because I was in care."(R3, Female, dual heritage)

"Didn't tell anyone I was in care and when I did they were shocked."(R6, Female, black Caribbean)

"Hard being in care. Used to fight over comments about my mother. Difficult every one knowing your business."(R10, Male, black Caribbean)

Looked after respondents also had to grapple with frequent placement changes, which often meant changing schools. Any friendships and relationships built up over time with trusted adults were lost. At the extreme end, one respondent had more than 10 placement changes in seven years.

Stigma and labelling was reported by looked after respondents as being expressed through unwarranted punishment and greater surveillance and less tolerance of behaviour coupled with an absence of support.

A social work respondent stated:

"It's hard to get schools to put in support for children in care, they more readily look to criminalise them than put in support. Saying that, some youngsters in care wear the badge of being in care quite proudly while others are embarrassed. Ultimately it

depends on the emotional needs of the young person as some will dig in to achieve and others will be so overwhelmed by what happened to them that they can't overcome it. Others have had so many changes in schools they are quite behind and can't catch up. We try to keep those changes to a minimum but often have no choice but to move the child. Sometimes, I have to speak to teachers about being more considerate and having discussions in confidential areas where no one can overhear them."(SW04, Female, black Caribbean)

Breaching confidentiality and insensitive interactions by teachers permeated looked after respondents' narratives and contributed to their predominantly negative memories of schooling:

"School was the most embarrassing thing in the world when kids find out you are in foster care. When they take the register… our register has our profiles and kids used to check profiles and ask me 'is that your Aunty or what'? And I have to be like, this happened and that happened, etc. Parents evening I used to dread so much."(R2, Male, black Caribbean)

Doing well in public exams is unusual for black and dual heritage young people in general, more so if they were looked-after. Despite this, one respondent was set to sit eleven GCSE exams, which he had been prepared for by a special scheme that allocated him a dedicated tutor who visited him at his placement for additional lessons. The incentive of £100.00 for every exam passed secured his cooperation. He never took these exams as he was he was arrested and imprisoned for grievous bodily harm on the same day:

"Being in care and school I remember doing what I wanted – and not really being bothered. No homework, as soon as I got home I was out. Not turned on to education at all. It worked out in the end as I got an educational worker for the last few months of my schooling who helped me prepare for 11 GCSE's – she wasn't from the

education system but came round to the home to help me. But I went to prison in year 11 and didn't go back. This lady prepared me for 11 GCSE's and we worked hard. I went to prison on the day of my exams. We appealed on the grounds of the exams but they said there was too much force used"(R5, Male, black Caribbean)

Educational success statistics for this group is the worst for all demographic groups and, according to some looked after respondents, is partly explained by low expectations:

"You're stereotyped cos kids in care are never seen to do well. I was never [said her own name] I was a statistic. Teachers and schools need to be taught about kids in care they need to be trained that being in care is a very touchy subject. It nearly changed my temperament. Once you come in care you feel you are on your own. I see it as I lived on my own since I was 13. You are your own family. Most foster carers, if something happens at school they will not defend you – unlike parents who will defend you in front of teachers even though you may be in trouble when you get home."(R1, Female, black Caribbean)

Looked after respondents' views were consistent in that they wanted foster carers, social workers and teachers to be more sensitive to their position in relation to their peers and to not embarrass them publicly. In some cases participants who were hiding their looked after status had their efforts undermined by carers and social workers which was the cause of much resentment and ill feeling:

"Having an African foster carer come to see your teacher in their traditional clothes, for me it catches a lot a attention as I am not African and people think it's odd."(R1, Female, dual heritage)

"School was horrible. It was the worst thing about being in care. Every teacher knew you were in care and they would single you out for it. When my foster carer came in they would announce over the tannoy, 'xxx, your foster carer is here' and kids would say 'I didn't know you were in care'. I hate being singled out and when kids asked 'I didn't know you was in care' I thought you lived at home?' I used to act out and hit them, so that everyone knew if they asked that question what would happen. So I was always in trouble."(R1, Female, dual heritage)

4.13: Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented an extensive analytic narrative, which reports the data, whilst retaining the 'voices' of participants through illustrative quotes, thus deepening our understanding of the experiences of this marginalised group. The three major themes identified during analysis were reported as: emotional unavailability, ethnicity and surviving schooling. The results are all based on the statements of the looked after respondents interviewed (n.10) for this study. Five (n.5) social workers were also interviewed to provide context to the young people's views. Seven subthemes extend the depth of the narrative, illustrating the complexity of participants' experiences. Emotional unavailability of carers was the source of much distress to the looked after respondents because it reinforced their marginal status in the very place where they were meant to feel safe and secure and feel like they belonged. Some LAC participants attributed this lack of warmth to alternative motivations on the part of the carers and coined a phrase to sum up their feelings 'nine to fivers'. Social workers did not fare much better in the estimation of looked after respondents which meant, from the respondents perspective, that they were left to work through their own emotional development and problems with little support from those mandated by the state to perform this role. The LAC reported a lack of quality long-term, warm and nurturing relationships.

Looked after respondents also reported developing a positive sense of identity as being important to them but said that this was not given much attention by those charged with their care and wellbeing. Issues of matching carers and workers arose in

their narratives, and whilst not all were supportive of matching due to their personal experiences, most supported it. All looked after respondents agreed that their voices needed to be included in the decision making process – but this was not the case. Social workers, for their part, supported racial matching but did not want to get to a position where workers were only allocated cases that matched their racial and ethnic background as they perceived this as being potentially deskilling for workers and would prevent on-going learning about different cultures. Workers reported decision making without direction from their employers on this issue, which left individual workers to make choices based on their political commitment for or against placement matching.

The looked after respondents held a particular animosity for their school experiences which invariably were described as being an ordeal to get through. The application of stigmatisation and negative views and labels by others were seen to act against any degree of normality and/or success in school attainment. Pupils of secondary school age were particularly 'at risk' and even if not identified as troublemakers at primary school, they developed learning and behavioural problems before leaving secondary school. Frustration was expressed against teachers and carers for holding low expectations, not encouraging them and being insensitive to their needs as looked after children.

The following chapter presents a detailed discussion of these findings, in relation to the research literature and also considers their wider implications.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1: Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how the experience of being looked after impacts on the emotional well-being of black and dual-heritage young people, and how social work practice frameworks and professional interventions contribute to these experiences. The data may generate evidence that builds on and contributes to a) The levels of knowledge and understanding on the emotional well-being of the target group, b) Policy development as it effects this group c) Existing understandings of the needs of this demographic d) The development of a new practice framework for agencies and social workers working in this area.

The research was designed to address the following questions:

- *How does the experience of being looked after impact on the emotional well-being of black and dual heritage looked after young people?*
- *How do practice frameworks, and professional interventions promote emotional well–being in this population?*

Three major themes emerged from the data: 1) Emotional Unavailability 2) Ethnicity 3) Surviving School. Seven sub-themes also emerged: Under Emotional Unavailability are: 1) Emotions 2) Social Worker Qualities 3) Nine to fivers 4)

Feeling Isolated. Under Ethnicity is: 5) Identity. And under Surviving School are: 6) Behaviour and Exclusions, and 7) Stigma and Labelling

This chapter proceeds by first discussing the key findings in the context of previous research on the experiences of looked after young people in general, and black and dual heritage looked after young people in particular. Second, it discusses critically the relevance of the findings for practice frameworks, professional interventions and policy in order to reach a better understanding of how workers can better promote the emotional wellbeing of black and dual heritage looked after young people.

When analysed for gender differences the data drawn from narrative interpretive accounts of respondents revealed little difference in the experiences between male and female respondents in relation to the key research questions. Similarly the literature reveals little differences in black or dual heritage LAC experiences. For care leavers Barn et al (2005) found some gender differences in unemployment rates following a period of time spent in care in that males were more likely to be unemployed than females (575/50%) and females more likely to be in part time work (p.29). Barn also reported women to be more ambitious and resolute than males in education and employment. This study reported two respondents who had spent time in prison who were male. However, the females reported disruptive and anti-social behaviour including drink and drugs. The three main themes of emotional unavailability, poor schooling and ethnicity impacted both genders similarly with no discernible differences in impact or treatment by social workers and carers.

5.2: Theme 1: Emotional (Un)Availability

Definition: Emotional Unavailability as taken from the data relates to professionals adopting an emotionally unresponsive, uncaring attitude to the young person in their care. Emotional unavailability, isolation and the respondents' own emotional wellbeing are inextricably linked. This theme represent attitudes and behaviours

expressed by main carers, and to a lesser extent, social workers, that convey an unfeeling and emotionally unresponsive position towards respondents.

5.2.1: Sub-theme 1: Emotions

Almost all respondents in the analysis recognised their care experiences as being emotionally damaging to them. They reported either having lost touch with their emotions, feeling angry all the time, using drink and smoking excessively, or having developed behavioural issues that are now a problem for them. The literature reports little evidence as to the impact of ethnicity on the emotional well-being and mental health problems of looked after young people (TCRU, 2007, Dogra et al., 2012). This marginalisation and universalising through colour-blind approaches to black youth in the literature and research agenda finds expression in a number of studies reviewed in chapter 2. Rohner (2004) stressed the implications of neglecting the emotional aspect of care. *'Children who experience or perceive significant rejection are likely to feel ever-increasing anger, resentment and other destructive emotions that may become intensely painful… they often have problems with being able or willing to express affection and warmth and in knowing how to give, or even being capable of accepting these positive emotions from others.' (p833).*

Rohner (2004) argued that children and young people regardless of background need a warm positive acceptance from their care givers and, where this is lacking, the young people in his study reported themselves as hostile, aggressive, lacking self-esteem and being emotionally unresponsive. Similar feedback was obtained from respondents in this study from the young people participating. In addition, social worker respondents admitted that they often focused on the material practicalities of care over the emotional and attributed this down to the system in which they work:
"As social workers we do concentrate on the practical side of care and a lot of things get missed, and then five years down the line everyone is like ohhh it's all kicking off for the young person. It's a systemic thing that needs to change." (SW01, Female, black Caribbean).

Rohner's (ibid) message for practitioners and carers was the need to find culturally appropriate ways to communicate warmth and affection and avoid behaviours that indicate coldness and a lack of affection. In using the term 'culturally appropriate' he is conceding that one size doesn't fit all even though Parental-Acceptance-Rejection theory is applicable universally. "*Even though parents everywhere may express acceptance (warmth, affection, support, care, concern) and rejection (coldness, lack of affection, hostility, aggression, indifference, neglect), the way they do it is highly variable and saturated with cultural or sometimes idiosyncratic meaning.*" (Rohner, 2004 p833). For Rohner culture and ethnicity shape the specific words and behaviour associated with different categories of parental acceptance of which there are four: warmth–affection (or its opposite, coldness–lack of affection); hostility–aggression; indifference–neglect, and undifferentiated rejection (Rohner, 2004, p830).

Matching culture and ethnicity in carers is problematic in the context of a shortage of foster carers in general and black and dual heritage foster carers in particular (The Fostering Network, 2015). The Fostering Network reports that fostering services need to recruit a further 6,900 foster families in the next twelve months in England to meet the minimum recruitment targets (Ibid). Foster carers from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are underrepresented in the foster care population, which is concerning given the overrepresentation of black and dual heritage young people in the system at any one time. However, in some studies an overrepresentation of black carers are reported (Ofsted, 2011), but this masks the fact that black families do not form a homogenous group and the availability of carers in different ethnic groups will vary, as will their location (Department for Education, 2011). Dual heritage LAC account for 9% of LAC whereas foster carers from dual heritage backgrounds accounted for fewer than 3% of the population of foster carers (DfE, Ibid). Overall, this means that matching placements for culture and ethnicity is less likely to happen for black and dual heritage groups. Moreover, in the context of an overall shortage of carers, rather than being carefully matched with carers young people will be placed with whoever is available at the time (perhaps out of area) which does not bode well for quality long term relationships.

Rohner's Parental Acceptance–Rejection Theory is close to attachment theory (Rutter, 1979) in that both predict consequences of neglect of emotional needs as insecure attachments linking to emotional, social and behavioural problems (Howe, 2005, Rohner et al 2004). Many of the social workers in this study observed the same cold treatment from carers, and advocated for young people where they could. They too thought that many of the foster carers they worked with were financially motivated, but said they were prevented from doing anything about this by a lack of placements. However, in some instances where they could, they moved the child, but this was not without anxiety as they were mindful that repeated moves is bad for young people's development (see DfES, 2006, NICE, 2010) and often the choice they faced was one of the least worst possibilities.

The literature is in agreement that such unresponsive parenting is far removed from what is required to meet emotional needs of developing young people (Rutter, 1979, Baumrind, 1993). Chase et al (2006) for example, emphasised the need for professionals to facilitate opportunities for looked after children to develop meaningful and consistent relationships with substitute carers and professionals as being vital for their emotional well-being. Young people subject to separation, loss and even abuse need to be cared for by skilled carers attuned to the child's particular needs and who provides emotional warmth (Baumrind, 1993). Baumrind (Ibid) identified four parenting styles: indulgent, neglectful, authoritarian and authoritative. Authoritative parenting combines a high level of support with high parental sensitivity. This style uses non-punitive punishments but in turn expects mature behaviour. It establishes firm rules, which are re-enforced and offers warm and caring support. Respondents in the study were rarely subject to such a style. The style that accords with reports in this study most closely is that of authoritarian with elements of neglectful: *"Adoptive parents gave us love but because we were not their children they never treated us like we were theirs. We were strangers living in their house. No genuine affection."* (R4, Male, dual-heritage)

"It didn't feel homely. I left there because I couldn't use the front room as she banned me. I couldn't invite friends back as she didn't want people to know where she lived. I

had a bathroom, which I couldn't use. She made it seem like she care." (R6, Female, black Caribbean)

The quote above is illustrative of other respondents whose profiles include multiple placements. Leathers (2006) found that where foster children are excluded from participation in foster family relationships this can lead to poor behaviour as reported by the entire sample of young people, and placement breakdown. Conversely inclusivity in foster family relationships has been shown to exert a beneficial effect on placement stability (Leathers, 2006).

The point was well made by one of the looked after participants that providing authentic warmth to young people who are damaged through their experiences is not easy: *"some of us are shits, we do horrible things, but at least like us!" (R1, Female, dual heritage)*. This is why selection and training of carers is so important. Carers are called upon to do a tough job, which calls for many personal qualities and knowledge, much of which is rooted in psychology. The Care Matters White Paper (2007) considers it essential that professionals have a good understanding of attachment theory so they may help a vulnerable child to develop a secure emotional base (p18). This is seen as essential to building resilience. In terms of practice pointers Cameron and Maginn (2008) recommend that when problems arise the site of intervention should be carers rather than the young person. Barth et al (2005) inject a note of caution in reminding us of the limited evidence base for predicting the long-term behaviour of maltreated children using attachment theory. Like Cameron and Maginn they also caution a one-sided focus aimed at getting young people to adjust their behaviour. Cameron and Maginn (Ibid) developed a system that empowers staff to engage therapeutically with young people to provide what they call 'authentic warmth'. Their research centres around '7 Pillars of Parenting' which are: primary care and protection, secure attachment, positive self-perception, emotional competence, self-management skills, resilience and a sense of belonging (Cameron and Maginn 2009). Each Pillar suggests behaviours that care staff can adopt to promote that Pillar. These pillars map with Every Child Matters Outcomes (DfES, 2003) and the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*

(2000) 'Child's Developmental Needs' Domain. This style of parenting enables young people to deal with rejection, separation, loss, abuse and the need to belong: they are then best placed to benefit from their schooling. This was picked up by at least one social worker in the study: *"People [social workers, carers and policy makers] don't put enough emphasis on the emotional damage about separation and loss. These kids leave care and can't move forward. I think black children need therapeutic input from day one, from the day they go into care. Social workers and foster carers need to be trained in a way that they are constantly working in a therapeutic way. I don't mean the kids are sent to therapy but in your everyday interactions you need to be using therapeutic talk." (SW03, Female, black Caribbean).*

Other social workers were split on the notion of either referring on or personally upskilling to work with emotionally traumatised looked after young people. One worker said that their senior management encouraged staff to work creatively to engage with young people. This worker supported additional training for workers on creative interventions that would then negate the need to refer young people for specialist services with which they seldom engaged.

The worker quoted above has had a unique insight as she was not only a social worker but was care experienced herself from an early age. In the quote above she calls for all workers to be therapists. She did not mean this in a clinical sense but her wish was for workers to be trained to engage with looked after children and young people in a therapeutic fashion. The literature supports use of psychologically derived knowledge by carers to help them understand why knowledge about post-traumatic stress disorder as well as attachment and identity theories may all be relevant to help them understand why these young people test them and reject any demonstration of kindness and affection. As mentioned above, the focus of attention should be on the carers rather than young people and this also finds support from Rushton and Minnis (2002). They found that the only interventions with demonstrated effectiveness in reducing the emotional and behavioural problems of looked after children were those delivered either in close liaison with, or directly through, the foster-carers themselves.

Certainly the young people in the study were in agreement with the notion that carers need to be trained about their needs, and all agreed that they needed to be listened to more: *"I think social workers need to teach foster carers what it's like to be a child in care. They need to hear from kids in care and realise it's not fun. A lot of kids come from bad places…no emotion is like a brick wall. They tell us we will be loved and cared for in a foster family so you go into a placement thinking they will care for you and once you're in the home you can be in your room for three days and they don't check. It's like I'm meant to come to you with open arms but you stand there with folded arms (R1, Female dual-heritage).* This respondent's plea to be heard has legislative support as looked after children and young people are identified as a group whose views should be heard and contribute to the development of policy (DfES 2007; DCSF 2008). Messages from respondents in this study however, suggests that despite a number of policy and good practice guidelines on involving LAC in decisions that affect them, this principle is not yet realised in practice.

There is no shortage currently of studies seeking to ascertain those voices. The literature review identified over one hundred studies that garnered children's views on various topics on their journey through care. Selwyn and Riley (2015) conducted one such review of ninety seven studies. Their analysis revealed four major themes a key one of which was building quality relationships with adults, and for these relationships to be loving, caring and affectionate (p1). Their finding also echo this study in another way, in that young people felt that carers and workers were uninterested in helping them keep long-standing relationships. The authors speculate, that this led to feelings of abandonment and in turn contributed to a lack of attachment figures in their lives. We know through Bowlby's (1969) work the importance of consistent, sensitive and responsive interactions with caregivers to the development of secure attachments. Other authors have also championed the value of long-term relationships to the child's need for continuity and a secure base (Schofield and Beek, 2009). The deviant case (who avoided multiple placements) was the sole respondent in this study to say that they were not treated differently to others in their carer's home such a respondent would be seen by Rutter (1998) as accumulating resilience promoting factors. The argument would be that this young person benefited from 'compensatory secure attachment' through long-term foster care; as stability and

continuity of care is regarded as important as secure attachment depending on the characteristics of the young person involved.

Where looked-after children and young people lack quality caring relationships they can feel deprived. A number of respondents told how they believe that their capacity to feel and express emotion has been damaged as a result of their care experiences. Gaskell (2010) explains it as these children becoming skilled at hiding their feelings rather than not knowing how to show them. This does a disservice to these young people as it implies a deliberate act, whereas the respondents were clear that they could not show emotion even if they wanted to. This is consistent with PAR theory (Rohner, 2004) which argues that parental rejection results in people closing off emotionally. This is a defensive psychological response which may not be recognised by the young person and indeed may be denied. Similarly, Gaskell (2010) argued that looked after young people may avoid emotional encounters, stiffen when held and become emotionally detached. He explains this behaviour as a result of repeated perceived rejection and constantly being let down which then leads to young people viewing the world through a dominant attachment pattern in which all adult behaviours are filtered through the lens of their previous experiences of being failed. Young people may not be aware that this is happening or may gain insight into these processes through reflection many years after. This was the case for this next respondent who interestingly, used the word 'crave' to describe his need for love. The use of that word reveals much in that it conveys more than a desire, it can be interpreted as more akin to desperation: *"I craved love – they never used to give me it." (R4, Male, dual–heritage).* The use of the word 'love' is unusual in a caring sense. But Luke and Coyne (2008) described love as being one of two central themes they found in their study and recommended that carers show explicit and consistent displays of affection. Chase et al (2006) reported that: '*One of the most striking findings to emerge from the interviews was the frequency with which emotional influences; such as the need to love someone was mentioned.'* Luke and Coyne (Ibid) argued that if foster parents offered consistent messages of love and support, the child will begin to internalize a more positive self-concept which may help reshape their working model of the self as a person who is worthy of the love offered to them. Chase et al (2006) concur with this and include social workers as well as carers as

people who should develop meaningful consistent relationships with looked after young people since this is vital for their emotional wellbeing.

Respondents reported emotional deprivation and privation with varying degrees of insight as to what was going on. Most felt at odds at the time of the placements. Some, like the respondent quoted above, needed to reflect on his experiences and compare them with others to realise the extent of his deprivation. This then places a responsibility on carers and professionals to form emotional bonds with all young people in their care and to recognise where young people need additional help. Research suggests that caregivers are keen to form emotional bonds with their charges (Oke et al 2013) but some may not be able to meet the young people's needs in this regard because they never experienced secure attachments in their own lives or because of their indifferent attitudes to the importance of emotional attachments (Dozier and Sepulveda, 2004). By contrast respondents argue forcefully for emotionally available carers with the right attitudes: "*Social services should do proper checks to make sure every one looking after children is safe and don't abuse the kids and allow them to be emotionally available. You can't have a child and not be attached to them. That's why many kids in care are so fucked up they lose touch with their emotions. You don't feel things; you don't feel happy, you don't cry. For me it's proper weird. I haven't cried for 10 years. When I see people crying over a death I say why are you crying? and then I say to myself I'm pretty fucked up.*" (R1, Female dual-heritage)

Social workers may not realise their power to provide secondary attachment figures to these young people. Attachment is one of the main practice theories workers can draw upon. This theory provides a theoretical base for interventions and has official approval from the Care Matters White Paper (2007): it is seen as essential knowledge for child care social workers because of its role in building resilience. Luke et al (2014) however caution practitioners against using only Attachment and social learning theories, as these may not meet the needs of all looked after children (p120). Munro (p.131) reported that her sample regarded the social worker as very powerful person in their lives and when this relationship was strong the social worker could be

a strong ally for them. Bell (2002) uses the concept of 'secondary attachment' to describe the child– social worker relationship. Social workers were seen as being well placed to provide this attachment figure as their relationship with children reflects aspects of a parental role. In her study of children involved in the child protection system Bell (2002) found that the needs of the children were more likely to be met where relationships with professionals were supportive. Unfortunately many of the relationships between workers and young people in this study were negative. Workers complained of lack of time to do quality work by which they mean having the time to spend one-to-one developing relationships with young people. Caseload pressures emerged as chief amongst the reasons put forward to explain this. Allain (2007) also found this in her study on how social workers meet the cultural needs of black looked after children. She found that big caseloads and time constraints impacted on the depth of work that could be done with the young people. Munro (2001) found much the same when her respondents complained about the high turnover of staff and lack of social worker reliability, which they internalised and interpreted as a sign of their own low status.

5.2.2: Sub-theme 2: Feeling Isolated

This sub theme links strongly with emotional unavailability and is included because respondent after respondent made the point that being looked after for them was characterised by feelings of being alone and isolated - even within families. One young dual heritage female who had been in care for 7 years said that throughout her care career she had no one to confide in and felt isolated and on her own for most of that time. The literature confirms that it only takes one person to act as an anchor for a looked after child to provide them with a positive sense of wellbeing (Dickson et al 2010). We also know through the work of Martin and Jackson (2002) that a factor in looked after young people succeeding in life is having at least one person in their life who believes in them. That this respondent went seven years without a single person (be it foster parent, social worker, family member or peer) to confide in is regrettable and would have been damaging to her emotional development and compounded further her sense of isolation.

Most respondents said they would not confide in their main carer if they were feeling down emotionally. These finding points to poor quality, untrusting relationships with main carers and it is these relationships that are key to the emotional well-being of looked after children. Knowing that someone is there for them and will respect their confidentiality emerged as a minor theme on this subject. Respondents in this study did not experience what Cameron and Maginn (2008) termed 'authentic warmth' where carers engage therapeutically with their young people so that they feel that at least one person cares about them rather than just 'looking after' their material needs. Dickson et al (2002) noted that having someone to talk to related directly to young people feeling that they were listened to, valued and treated with respect.

It is important to add that, for black and dual heritage looked after young people, having to deal with the effects of racism and discrimination would be an additional burden. In terms of dealing with racism Barn et al (2005) found that black and dual heritage looked after children's self-esteem and confidence are constantly undermined by cultural insensitivity by those around them (Barn et al 2005). They also have to deal with what Ince (1998) called 'displaced identity' which is the estrangement of these children from their birth family which may be the only way they can access their cultural and ethnic identity (Voice of the Child in Care 2004). '*They want to know about their history, to learn about black achievers and to have positive black role models…They want black carers who will be kind to them and support them. They want to keep links with their families and to feel secure and comfortable in their skins and in the company of other black and minority people*'. (Voice for the Child in Care 2004a, p.6). One respondent spoke about his 'terrible' temper tantrums and said these would have been worse if he wasn't in touch with his Nan. 'Nan' as a relative here can be seen as an important protective factor that promoted resilience in the respondent. Underlining the importance of maintaining external connections with relatives: '*Even where family relationships were poor, family links, including those with brothers and sisters, grandparents and other members of the extended family, were very important to most*.' (DOH 1998, p.59)

Both Bagley (1993) and Maxime, (1993) stated how important the development of a positive racial identity is to meeting the emotional and psychological needs of black children in a racist society. Black and dual heritage looked after young people have additional struggles to answer the question of 'Who am I?' and the system fails to help them in this. It often hinders them through failing to ensure that regular contact with their birth family is maintained, and that they are not placed great distances away from home. Sinclair (2005) and Munro (2001) noted that black children had a desire to make sense of their history and a desire for contact with their birth families and other black people for the knowledge this gave them about their identity and culture. If this didn't happen they tended to put these issues on the 'back burner' with implications for their long term wellbeing.

The quality of carers experienced by respondents was generally experienced as poor, to the extent that one dismissed the idea of carers being selected and felt that some must have *'slipped through the net'.* *"Teenage problems, they [carers] were no help whatsoever. I couldn't turn to them and say 'mum I'm in trouble'."(R4, Male, dual-heritage).* Another said *"I think a lot of foster carers slip through the net and social services don't see what goes on and how isolated they make you feel." (R1, Female, dual heritage).* It was clear that carers and professionals did not pick up many of these emotional problems. As the carers were often cited as the cause, or main contributor, to the young person's distress this suggests a radical revision of carer selection, training and support. Currently foster carer recruitment involves initial checks and references taken up from three referees followed by an assessment report written about the family by a social worker. The report then goes to a fostering panel that decides if the family can become foster carers. It is questionable whether this is a sufficiently rigorous process to select families who will look after some of the most damaged and vulnerable young people in society and it has been described as '*an extremely pertinent area requiring further research* (Morgan and Barron, 2011). From their descriptions of their care some of the young people in this study could be said to have suffered emotional harm according to the definition contained in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services where emotional harm has been described as:

'Abnormalities of emotions, behaviour or social relationships sufficiently

marked or prolonged to cause suffering or risk to optimal development
in the child or distress or disturbance in the family or community.'(NSF, DH 2004).

Behavioural manifestations of emotional trauma would, in almost all cases, be responded to by either punishment or taken as an indicator of mental ill health, in other words seen as pathological rather than a product of the system. It seems therefore that recruiting and training carers who can recognise the symptoms and speculate on the non-pathological causes of bad behaviour is required (Taylor et al, 2008). Carers knowledgeable in psychologically orientated theories for practice and who can connect with young people and link them to their history and heritage are crucial, especially where white carers are looking after black children (SCIE, 2008). This is all the more important as the work of Rushton and Minnis (2002) tells us that the only interventions with demonstrated effectiveness in reducing the emotional and behavioural problems of looked after children are those delivered with or through foster-carers themselves. Carers then become central to promoting emotional wellbeing. This is reinforced by Chamberlain et al (2006) who found that, regardless of the children's characteristics, foster carers whose parenting styles were organised, positive and showed consistent emotional availability and sensitivity recorded fewer placement disruptions. This applied also to foster carers who welcomed the child as part of their family in which presumably, no rooms were ruled out of bounds and where there was equality of treatment between the foster carers own children and the foster child (Leathers, 2006). It is worth noting that most of the respondents in this study experienced differential treatment compared to the foster carer's own children and were made to feel different and less worthy. In this context findings from Barth et al (2005) reminding us to keep the focus on carers to facilitate attachment, rather than a 'one-sided' focus on getting young people to adjust their behaviours, are important. Listening to young people and taking their views into consideration as good practice dictates, does not always happen. Apart from feeling excluded and isolated, not being consulted on matters that affect them directly can lead to feelings of helplessness and have a significant impact on the young people's future abilities to make decisions (Leeson, 2007). That being the case excluding young people from participating in decisions holds both short *and* long-term consequences for their wellbeing.

Respondents felt that carers and social workers ignored the importance of maintaining relationships, which contributed to their feelings of isolation and abandonment. These responses would have the effect of isolating them further and contributed to a lack of attachment figures in their lives. The literature is clear that where a young person is securely attached to at least one care giver they can more easily develop attachments to others (Howe, 2005). Selwyn and Riley (2015) identified much the same phenomenon in their review of studies on children's views and identified this as a main theme (see p.1). Dozier and Sepulveda, similarly (2004) identified carers' attitude to the importance of attachment issues as being instrumental in their ability to recognize attachment symptoms and their willingness to get help. In addition, for the respondents in this study, the lack of stability of social workers precluded their use of social workers as 'secondary attachment' figures (Bell, 2002). Looked after respondents were clear that they did not regard social workers as people they would go to if they were feeling down: *"If I was down I would talk to my older brother it wouldn't be a social worker or foster carer. Both are nine to fivers."(R10, Male, black Caribbean).*

Respondents also did not find social workers very reliable. This suggests being let down repeatedly over appointments or workers not being contactable. Participants reported that they avoided becoming emotionally close to social workers for fear they would soon move on – which many did. This perhaps is an area that needs support through policy intervention to give legislative weight to ensure that workers remain with young people for as long as they stay employed by that authority as it is recognised that having a positive and sustained personal relationship with their social worker promotes the emotional well-being of looked after young people (DfE 2007). The Fostering Network (2015) also calls for the high turnover of social workers to be urgently addressed. However, it is recognised that workers will have their own career plans and cannot be compelled to remain in a post, but as long as they remain with that employer, in the same job, local and national policies could be developed to strengthen to maintaining relationships with children and young people in care.

5.2.3: Sub-theme 3: Nine to Fivers

Cameron and Maginn (2011) remind us that continuous good parenting and emotional support are crucial for looked after children in order for them to be able to develop personally, socially and intellectually. Hence a focus on external behaviours alone runs the risk of overlooking internal drivers for poor behaviour and is consistent with this study's findings of young people feeling chastised frequently and often by adult carers for their behaviour. *"The one thing about being in care I remember is always getting told off" (R1, Female, dual-heritage).* Some of the social workers interviewed agreed with the young people regarding the financial motivation of foster carers to perform the role, which is interesting as they are responsible for placing the young people with these carers. The difficulty for social workers is that, in meeting the material needs of the young person, at the surface level, the carer may be doing just enough to avoid social work censure.

Where evidence exists from the young people, for example, when they report differential treatment and being banned from entering certain rooms, this may prompt action on the part of the social worker: *"One child couldn't sit in the front room… one case I had I think social services were late with their payments to the foster carer and she [the carer] was harassing the [looked after] girl as if she had anything to do with it, so I moved her." (SW04, Female, black Caribbean).* Yet social workers know that repeated changes of placement would not be in the best interest of that young person (Minnis and Devine, 201). It is this tension that social workers mentioned grappling with repeatedly.

The theme of financial reward was prominent as an explanation for poor care for a number of young people. The young people did not pick up on the fact that good carers are also paid. Clearly then where carers are particularly skilled and can convey genuine affection for the child this leads the young person setting aside knowledge of payment. As one worker put it: *"these kids are well aware that people are paid to do a job for them so unless someone has a particularly skilled way of working with them they will get that thrown in their face. When things go wrong that's the first thing kids*

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say" (SW03, Female, black Caribbean). For some of the young people interviewed their experiences led them to speculate on the proportions of staff motivated solely by reward: *"I think 95% are in it because they get paid very well. It's an easy way to get money so you don't have to go out to work. 5% do it cos they want to change a kid's life. I can always tell what a foster carer is like the minute I step in to their aura. They change the minute the social worker leaves. You can feel it when somebody actually genuinely cares." (R1, Female, dual-heritage*). Gaskell (2010) reports how looked after children begin to view all relationships through a certain dominant attachment pattern due to their previous experiences. This would explain in part why all foster carers motives were questioned until the carers proved themselves otherwise to the young people. This 'testing out' to see whether the carer cared could be recognised in the narrative from one female respondent who reported deliberately defying a new carer's instructions about the time to return home at night. The young person reported that she decided the carer was 'authentic' due to the carer's response to the situation, which showed that not only did she care for the young person but her response was experienced as respectful and non-punitive. The respondent was impressed that the carer did not automatically call the police as instructed by social services so to do, and this 'proved' whose side she was on.

Two young people separately coined a term for professionals they consider to be motivated by reward - 'nine-to-fivers'. *"Foster carers need to not see it as work - as a nine to five. They shouldn't look at a child and see money, the second you look at a kid and see dollar signs that's when it goes off." (R10, Male black Caribbean).* The other respondent talking about social workers said*: "Social workers are nine to fivers - in it for the money.* The phrase needs little explanation and is interpreted as representing an attitude, an approach to the professional role, which regards looked after young people as a means to an end. It also includes an element of deceit: *They all say the right things and put a show on in front of social workers saying ohh I'm this kind of person and I'm that, but when they actually get the kid it's a different story." (R7, Male, dual-heritage).* Not all carers and workers are regarded as 'nine-to-fivers' and the challenge to practitioners and policy makers is to identify behaviours signalling such a label and address it along with the clear message which is to listen to young people in their feedback on professionals.

The participant's responses suggests that 'nine-to-fivers' do the minimum expected, do not commit emotionally, are emotionally unreliable, show little empathy and (when applied to carers) they may openly treat the looked after young person less favourably than their own children. In terms of the literature McDermid et al (2012) found finance not to be the prime motivator for carers, but it loomed large as a consideration in other studies (Peake and Townsend 2012, Kirton, 2001). Kirton's sample was split 50/50 as to whether they viewed their carer role as 'parenting' or a 'job' – Kirton found that some who professed to be 'parents' nevertheless complained about the inadequate fee (p201). One third of Kirton's carers rated payment for the 'job' highly and spoke of planning kitchen extensions and holidays on the back of it. Although one said they would do the caring role for nothing. Some social work respondents agree with the label 'nine-to-fivers' also in relation to social workers: *"Social work is a profession and social workers vary as to how much they care as well. Some people just don't care. They punch the clock and that's it." (SW04, Female, Black Caribbean). Another worker said about carers: "They're paid to do a job and sometimes the foster carers don't even care that the children can see that they don't care" (SW03, Female, black Caribbean).* One criticism of the literature in this regard is the lack of studies on the role of payments across income groups. For example, it might be argued that traditionally low income marginalised groups would be drawn towards fostering as an income source to a greater degree than groups with alternative choices in the job market. It is possible of course that Kirton's findings may represent an artefact of age as a more recent research review of the international literature about why people become foster carers (Sebba, 2012) identified three main findings: people most often consider non-kinship fostering as a result of knowing other foster carers; the need for better information for the public to combat myths about fostering; and a lack of support for foster carers (p5). On the issue of finance Sebba (ibid) states that the main drivers for taking on the role of foster carer are intrinsic and essentially altruistic, and that income generation is not a principal motivation, although her review did point to the role of finance in retaining carers. Young people's perceptions of nine to fivers must therefore be placed in this context.

5.2.4: Sub-theme 4: Social Worker Qualities

Respondents in the main were negative about the qualities of their social workers. They spoke about workers being judgemental, patronising, stereotyping them, making errors in recording information that was not checked with them, lack of contact and of the high turnover of staff ('coming and going'). Yet, studies drawn from the review in Chapter two consistently show how much the young people value long term consistent support from social workers who advocate and care for them (NCB, 2006, Munro, 2001). Social workers in this study were drawn from a specialist leaving care team and so hold a key role in delivering services and improving outcomes for their clients. They have a lead role in assessing needs and ensuring that young people's health and wellbeing is met and when done well their efforts can literally transform lives (NCB, 2006, Munro, 2001).

Analysis from the data revealed that the looked after respondents underwent many changes in social workers. This links with the literature regarding barriers to quality social work where high staff turnover is identified as presenting formidable barriers to developing positive long-term relationships (Gaskell, 2010). One respondent described having so many workers that they began to 'blur'. Social workers 'coming and going' for all respondents was interpreted as being abandoned. *"I had four social workers. Never got on with one of them. The last one didn't leave me alone - always calling my phone. Can't remember details about other social workers." (R9, Male, black Caribbean).* Multiple social workers entering and leaving young people's lives acts against their wellbeing. McCleod (2010) is not alone in emphasising the place of a positive sustained relationship with a social worker in promoting looked after young peoples' wellbeing. Munro (2001) for example, reported participants, experiencing lack of social worker continuity as neglect. Continuous changes of worker militates against the development of trust, with young people eventually reaching the point where they question the wisdom of getting to know new workers in since they will soon move on. One of the social work respondents in this study was frustrated at this situation but felt powerless to influence it. Gaskell (2010) identified the same phenomenon as a repeated loss of trust and gave an example of a young person who

in time ceased placing trust in social workers. He called this a '*reciprocal relationship of mistrust*'. This research (Gaskell, 2010) demonstrates how young people internalise departures and how it reinforces their feelings of isolation and neglect. The manner of the leaving often also left much to be desired with many respondents in Gaskell's study reporting being told of the departure after the event and suffering long term stress as a result.

We saw above how workers were dismissed by some respondents, as 'nine to fivers'. Chase et al (2006) validates these sentiments when they reported that looked after young people were able to distinguish between professionals who showed affection and those who simply provided statutory care and viewed the young people as 'paper work'. Chase et al (Ibid) thought this issue needed addressing through practice and policy changes that afforded greater priority to developing consistent long-term relationships. However, two respondents mentioned inspirational workers who 'made things happen'. Interestingly both respondents had something to say as to the racial background of the worker, with the first being of the opinion that black social workers brought more passion to the role in trying to connect with black kids: '*I've never seen a white worker try to connect with me the way black workers do.*" (R10, Male, black Caribbean). The other respondent had positive experiences with a white male social worker and liked the way he tried to bond with him: "*he stood out as the best social worker I've had and is now a manager. Doesn't matter what background a social worker is but they should take time and establish a bond and make the young person feel comfortable - don't just jump in.*' (R7, Male, dual-heritage). On the question of racial matching respondents views illustrated the complexity of this practice. One black respondent, who only had black social workers, thought it was important that her worker reflected her ethnicity: "*All [my workers] were black. I asked for certain workers and said I don't want African social workers but I would have a white foster carer.*" (R6, Female, black Caribbean)

Although the question of matching the racial background of social workers to young people elicited mixed responses from looked after respondents the same could not be said for the social workers who solidly supported it. The social workers thought that being black and dual heritage gave them an opportunity to connect with black and

dual heritage looked after people. Prevatt Goldstein, (2002) cautioned against this in her study where black social workers who wanted to use their experiences to help black clients found their experiences and skills marginalised and exploited by the organisation and that this together with institutional racism, became a source of stress for them. Her recommendation was for young people to be exposed to a range of workers from all backgrounds who are trained to work with them. This would avoid 'essentialising' (p772) the young people and workers which had the drawback of only focussing on young people's racialised experiences.

Young people in McCleod's (2008) research reported feeling alienated by their social worker's perceived social class and preferred workers from a background closer to their own. Duncalf (2010) found much the same where young people wanted role models from similar ethnic backgrounds to themselves. Ince (1998) found that where black workers worked with black children the young people felt more supported. Personality comes into the equation, and relying on black skin tone alone to make a connection is not enough as one worker put it: *Personality has a lot to do with it, sometimes the relationship doesn't gel and sometimes it gels, I will always try, but there may be a barrier, some people don't like me - I'm fair but firm." (SW04, Female, black Caribbean).*

Although the matching of workers with young people based on race was supported by social workers it raised issues for them in terms of deskilling others, pigeonholing themselves and limiting learning opportunities for all. A study by Barn et al (2005) reported how agencies recognised the importance of matching young people with social workers from the same ethnic background and where young people asked for this the workers involved complied. It was noted in that study however, that many young people seemed less concerned about the ethnic background and more interested in the quality of the worker. Thorburn et al (2000) emphasised the importance of placing black and minority ethnic children in families that respect and support their racial and cultural background. Munro (2001) was encouraged by the actions of the local authority in her study and commended them in making efforts to place children in same race placements. She reported that the young respondents in her study

appreciated these efforts also (p.133). Data from some social workers in this study were more categorical in their commitment to matching social workers and this widened out to their views on same race placements. For example one worker said: *"I don't see how transracial placements can work. They [white carers] don't know how to protect those kids - love isn't enough." (SW03, Female, dual heritage).* All of the social workers shared this view except one who thought it more a training issue with foster carers to ensure that they had knowledge and skills to work with children and young people from all backgrounds. Others thought it best that looked after young people were matched for ethnicity. The main reason put forward was that same race placements maximise the carer's ability to help the child navigate through life as a black child. This means helping them deal with racism and building their self-concept, esteem and identity.

Looked after dual heritage young people however were clear in their view that social workers should not assume they were black. *"I felt it did make a difference and I support ethnic matching. I wasn't matched ethnically but should have been. Being mixed race in care is confusing; because you have black in you, you are treated as black. I would have liked to be placed with a mixed-race foster carer to see what it was like. They always put me with black carer - why assume mixed-race children to be black?" (R1, Female, dual heritage).* This plea finds echoes in the literature with Biehal et al (1995, p129) calling on workers not to pathologise dual heritage young people who don't identify as black as suffering from *'identity confusion'*. Similarly, Allain (2007) reported young people telling her social work respondents repeatedly not to automatically place dual heritage children with black carers and reported one case where the young person protested by repeatedly running away only to be returned to similar placements. This underlines the importance of listening to young people, as it is in this way that they can get the right sort of emotional support in terms of their cultural needs. The literature confirms there is some way to go in this (Ofsted 2010, Morgan 2010, Dent and Cameron, 2003). Workers also told Allain (Ibid) that big caseloads acted against good culturally aware social work as it meant workers cut corners and they could not do the in-depth work they wanted to do. It also meant that children's voices were drowned out by expediency.

Picking and choosing the ethnic background of the carer by respondents was apparently accommodated by most social workers in this study even though some researchers have found the opposite (Gaskell, 2010, Oliver, 2010) but this was an area that posed challenges for workers. For example, they reported having to probe further if a child objected to a placement on the grounds of race from a carer from their own race. This was because workers were alert for possible identity issues in the way the children see themselves. All workers said they would investigate the underlying reasons for this. One black looked-after respondent objected to African carers as she thought them too strict and requested white carers instead on the grounds that she had more in common with them. Interestingly, a social worker reported refusing a request of a young person to avoid black African carers in favour of white carers because, based on her knowledge of the young person, the worker felt the young person wanted carers she could dominate.

The reviewed literature tells us that matching carers with children of the same background may not always be in the children's best interest (Granville and Miller 2006), not least because it can lead to children being placed with foster carers who do not meet their individual needs. However, in general there is muted support for same race placements and acknowledgement that white carers may struggle to meet black needs (SCIE, 2004). Official Government policy on this is about meeting the individual needs of the child (Care Matters White Paper 2007) but this doesn't imply same race placements. Instead it means carers being sensitive to and understanding the child's cultural background and values (p.12), although guidance comes close to advocating same race placements: '*all things being equal and in the great majority of cases, placement with a family of similar ethnic origin and religion is most likely to meet a child's needs as fully as possible and to safeguard his or her welfare most effectively.*' (Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations Vol.3 2015).

The social workers in this study appeared not to be aware of any local or national guidance on this and mostly reported trying to match looked after children racially. Most were of the view that where they couldn't match they tried to ensure the carer was experienced in taking black children and could meet their needs and rightly

pointed out that, even with an exact ethnic match, there is no guarantee that the carers would be of sufficient quality to meet the child's needs. In this they were clear that quality trumped a match. With dual heritage children social workers tried their best to match at least one half of the child's identity and hoped they knew the child well enough to make the right decision. The child would be asked according to their level of understanding and age and their views taken into consideration. The complexity of this is illustrated well by this respondent: *"We had a choice of going to a white family or black but most of my family is black, I can't find any of the white side of my family - I can't find my Nan. The only person I can find is my mum and my granddad from that side but I don't talk to my granddad cause he's a little bit racist so I don't associate myself with him. Personally I'm glad I was placed with a black family that's how I look at it cause when you got black in you, you got special needs that should be catered to as obviously a white person won't really know how to sort it out. The social worker would have made the choice based on my needs."(R7, Male, dual-heritage).*

Here the respondent implies he was not consulted on the matter but seems happy with that because the outcome was as he wanted. His experiences as a dual heritage looked after young person pushed him towards his black father's side of the family as a result of being unable to locate his white mothers family and having done so found one of them to be 'a little bit racist'. His view of black children in care having special needs was interesting. Without going into detail about just what those special needs are and how they differ from white children in care, he followed this with two statements: that those needs should be addressed and that white carers wouldn't be able to do this. He then commended his social worker for placing him with a black family as having made the choice based on his needs. Without asking him the social worker may have made the placement decision on the assumption that dual heritage children are black. However, this would conform to what Owusu-Bempah (2005) termed 'rigid-practice' on the part of the practitioner, which can lead to unmet needs and do more harm than good (Ince, 1998).

It might not be too bold a leap to suggest that the special needs this respondent refers to arises from their ethnicity and so might include the need to tackle racism and prejudice and combat stereotypes and stigma in social life. He may have been

referring to hair care and diet also and an ability to link the child to a specific ethnicity be it Caribbean, African or any one of the different Islands and Countries that those identities include. This issue deserves attention as authors have long made the connection between an individual's emotional stability and how well they deal with prejudice and discrimination. Thompson, for example (2008, in Davies, 2008) makes a direct link between learning how to deal with emotional issues and learning how to deal with discrimination and oppression (p.106). Both require skills on the part of the social worker and require them to reflect critically on their own decision-making, attitudes and values.

5.3: Theme 2: Ethnicity

Definition: This theme refers to how the young people self-defined in relation to others from the same or different racial and cultural background and in relation to their status as looked after young people. It also includes discussion as to how far the young people felt their ethnic background and racial identity were considered and taken into account throughout their care career.

5.3.1: Sub-theme 1: Identity

The literature stresses the importance of identity as being emotionally and psychologically crucial to ethnic minority children in a racist society (Voice for the Child in Care 2004, Bagley, 1993, Maxime, 1993). What is striking about the respondent's accounts on this sub theme is their degree of similarity and congruence. For example, all respondents reported very little if any work done with them on their identity and where it occurred it was through the efforts of individual carers, usually same race, and/or relatives with whom they maintained some contact. In contrast to studies from the literature, such as that from The Voice of the Child in Care (2004) and Robinson (2000), both of which reported positive racial identities, attitudes and

self-esteem, respondents from this study were not so positive about this aspect. One black male reported white carers not wanting to acknowledge any racial differences at all.

The absence of identity work experienced by the young people speaks directly to both research questions as it is known that having a strong sense of identity is fundamental to achieving a sense of individuality (Giddens, 1991) which contributes greatly to emotional wellbeing. Quality interaction between social worker and young person is also implicated as working with young people directly on their identity affords workers an opportunity to repair their damaged emotional development through meaningful stable relationships that young people can depend on. Young people's relationships and emotions are closely linked to their wellbeing (Holmes, 2001) and professionals are well placed to facilitate opportunities for these young people to develop meaningful and consistent relationships either with them as their social worker, carers, and/or with relatives – this is seen as vital to their emotional well-being (Chase et al, 2006). Linking young people with relatives and ensuring they stay in contact with them not only promotes the development of a stable identity but also enhances the young person's social capital.

All young people in this study suffered from broken relationships, separation from birth families and multiple placement moves all of which act against the development of secure positive identities. In sharing common identities, as black and dual heritage looked after young people, the literature confirms that this group would be faced with additional barriers due to racism. Barn (1993 and 2005) found this to be true in respect of the social services, as did Ince, who branded the system to be racist in its operation (1998). As such these groups become vulnerable to 'internalised' racism (Jones and Waul, in Crimmens and Milligan, 2005) where black young people come to evaluate their own ethnicity using racist notions of others. This can potentially result in emotional frustration and borderline mental illness with symptoms of scrubbing their own skin in a bid to attain whiteness and 'fit in'. None of the respondents in this study reported such symptoms but two respondents reported wishing to be white. One of these respondents was abused by his mother and developed a hatred of black women that further complicated his sense of self. He was referred for therapy following a breakdown, which in itself followed extreme

behaviour that resulted in being physically restrained by residential home workers. Anger, rage and emotional and behavioural disturbances can arise as a failure to form an identity based on positive attributes (Rhoner, 2004, Dwivedi, 2002).

Respondent's statements confirmed that they regarded issues of ethnicity and identity as important. Social services came in for criticism from them for not matching placements as closely as young people would have liked. One dual heritage female from a Jamaican mother and English father railed against being placed with African carers and of "*always being put with people with different backgrounds to me and [social workers] wondering why my placements never worked*". This quote reflects the debate within the literature on the issue of identity and the extent to which the psychological wellbeing of dual heritage people is better served through identifying as black (Maxime, 1993) or self identifying as dual heritage (Owusu-Bampah, 1995). The imposition of a black identity on dual heritage young people by practitioners and welfare professionals is seen as racist (Owusu-Bempah and Howitt, 2000) as it supports the concept of race being biological in nature and that if 'tainted' by 'one-drop' of black blood then you must be black. It can also damage the young people involved in forcing them to deny one half of their heritage and denying mixed young people the right to self-identify (Owusu-Bempah, 2005).

Respondents also reported not always being secure about their identity and feeling confused about their racial identity. The notion of identity confusion is taken up in the literature in relation to both black and dual heritage young people but more often when discussing dual heritage young people. In general the devaluing of a black identity in a white society may lead to a form of internal racism where vulnerable young people come to internalise these negative messages and in effect come to devalue themselves (Bank, 2003). Dual heritage LAC suffer additional challenges to their self-esteem and ability to develop a positive self-image arising from other people, including practitioners, imposing an identity on them (Owusu-Bempah, 2002) and in the lack of social capital they have through often being isolated from family and peers often on both racial sides (Katz and Treacher, 2005). One respondent talked about having regular contact with his mixed-race mother and going through a process to arrive at a point where he describes himself as black whereas growing up he

described himself as English. This process finds support in the literature in a number of areas. One argues that predominantly it is the subjective socialisation that a young person receives that has a significant influence on how they identify themselves (Holmes, 1995). The second relates to the process of racial identification which, in the context of family placements is a '*hotly contested issue*' (Barn, 2001). Black identity models such as the 'negriscence' model proposed by Cross (1995) and a similar model developed for dual heritage people by Poston (1990) describe the process of developing racial identities. One respondent, who is dual heritage, admitted to not knowing his identity, as he had no contact with his parents and only one photograph of his mother. Barn et al (2005) reported much the same differences in racial identification for her sample and concluded that the best way maintain a sense of identity for black and dual heritage looked after children is to ensure they have access to different groups to which they belong including their birth family. Banks (2003) suggests that the process of developing a positive racial identity is unique to individuals and needs to be nurtured as a developmental process '*it does not develop overnight'* (Banks, 2003 p.159). Practitioners therefore need to heed these messages and resist viewing all dual heritage young people as 'black' as this can cause confusion in the young person who may have previously identified as white or dual-heritage.

The literature reported similar findings many years ago in the first study to look at young black people's experience of the care system which reported the children feeling confused about their identity due to a lack of cultural knowledge (First Key, 1987). Respondents were clear in their messages that they wanted workers to maintain links with their birth family, which is seen as a crucial element in the formation of a positive identity (Voice of the Child in Care 2004, Sinclair, 2005). Munro (2001) found black members of her sample raising the issue of ethnicity, which reflected their desire for more contact with their birth family and the knowledge this gave them about their identity. However, Jones and Waul (2005) found that parents' of black children were often excluded from their children's lives and felt blamed for the situation by carers and social workers. One respondent experienced this first hand: "*My nan was nice to every foster carer I had and was always telling me about my history but my foster carers always disliked my family.*"(R2, Male, black Caribbean).

Analysis from the social workers' data show that they are well aware of the needs of black and dual heritage looked after children and young people regarding identity issues. On the whole the social workers agreed with the proposition that black children have different needs and also supported same race placements. Research from Thoburn et al (2000) supports them in this proposition, as does legislation in the form of the Adoption and Children Act (2002). The professional respondents explained that for them the special needs of black looked after children arise from feeling like they don't fit in and living in a racist society and having to reconcile both. That would explain why, in the absence of knowledge of relevant policies, the workers tried to match placements for race themselves. Munro (2001) reported a slightly different situation where the local authority had a policy on same race placements, which was popular with the young people in her study (Munro, 2001).

Professional respondents spoke of building the self-esteem of black looked after young people even though studies referenced in the literature could find no link between self-esteem and ethnic identity for transracially placed young people (Thoburn et al, 2005). Workers reported actively looking for carers who could help the young people better handle the effects of racism. They said they looked for carers who had '*walked in their shoes'* and could therefore relay that learning to them. This was necessarily compromised in an emergency situation or where carers of certain backgrounds were not available. Allain, (2007) reported much the same in her study of workers being hampered from practicing holistically due to high caseloads, lack of time and pressures of placing in an emergency situation. In making placement plans it wasn't always clear whether the young person was consulted although good practice says they should be.

The search by practitioners for carers that they felt would socialise the young people into developing strategies to resist the effects of racism is an interesting finding in the context of transracial placements. The issue of race and ethnicity is relevant here as well as the right for mixed LAC to self-identify their heritage and the tendency for professionals to ascribe an identity to these young people. Often race and ethnicity are taken to mean the same thing, which leads to placement decisions, based on race (colour) but which ignores ethnic differences. Allain (2007) in her study of social workers noted this phenomenon, as did Barn (2001). At least one of the black young

people in this study and one dual heritage young person told of their frustration at placement decisions by black social workers that was supposed to be matched but took a simplistic view of 'black' and placed them with a different ethnic group to them which didn't work for that reason. Or in the case of the mixed race young person assumed her to be black despite her protestations to the contrary. Hence, where workers declare they actively look for carers that can help young people resist racism they themselves may be in need of a level of raised awareness about concepts such as race, culture and ethnicity and the nuances of mixedness which affords these young people the right to self-identify rather than be placed with black carers as a default position.

Yong people reported they wanted to be heard and not to be treated as one homogenous group and for workers not to assume that dual heritage children's needs would be best served by being placed with black families. In this workers have to take into account children's developmental stage as a search for identity becomes a key developmental task when a young person enters teenage years (Erickson, 1968). The relevance of the age of the child at different placement stages is illustrated through this quote from a care experienced social worker: *It's interesting as when I was eight I wanted to go with a white family but when I was aged around fourteen I identified more with my black side." (SW03, Female, dual heritage).*

An emerging theme on identity involved cultural differences between carers. Some respondents reported poor experiences with black carers as a result of different cultural practices. An example of this is where Caribbean young people were placed with African carers and where young people are placed with carers from different Caribbean Islands from their own origin. Young people acknowledged the similar experiences of racism and of feeling more comfortable when out as a family but complained about being unable to fully integrate due to differences in discipline, expectations, food and parenting styles. Allain (2007) reported similar findings with workers missing the subtleties of culture due to a singular focus on 'race'. This is a challenge to practitioners to be more aware of these cultural nuances and be more sensitive to cultural differences in the placement decisions as well as listening to young people and involving them where possible in decisions about their lives. The quote here is from a black male respondent from Antigua placed with Jamaican carers

and illustrates well the need to listen to children's voices and why looked after children should not be seen as a homogenous group *"With the Jamaican family, I felt like I belonged in a racial sense, but the way they cussed people… she had issues with me. I remember a placement I went to for a short while and I loved it but I had to leave as she had too many kids. She was very compassionate and loving. She was white, she puts her time into her kids. I prefer the foster carers where their hearts are in it."(R2, Male, black Caribbean).* Here, the young person is saying that he prefers a transracial placement where emotional needs are met to a same race placement which does not take into account cultural differences. Yet, analysis of this young person's narrative reveals he asked to be moved from a white family, as he felt alienated as a black male. He eventually concluded that his preference for placements was with any carer '*as long as their hearts are in it'*. He came to the conclusion that a black skin is no guarantee that a black child's identity needs will be met, a conclusion also reached via empirical study by Granville and Miller (2006). His quote raises interesting philosophical questions about matching for physical resemblance alone, regardless of cultural background. Such a match can lead to successful outcomes in that it would help the young person to identify with the family and increase the feeling of belonging. In other words where the social worker cannot match for race and ethnicity should the next best fit be for race only? From my experience as a social worker with LAC this is what happens in practice. Where 'ideal' matches were not available, for whatever reason, the next best option was accepted, and if that was not available, workers went down a list of preferable options until a 'suitable' and 'acceptable' placement had been found.

The social workers in the study were at their most cynical when commenting on the organisational system behind them which they regarded as hindering them in their wish to meet the identity needs of young people. The 'system' was criticised for paying 'lip service' to promoting identity and for not taking the issue seriously. The '*care system doesn't care*' was how one worker phrased it. Another stated a popular view that it was mostly down to the commitment of individual workers whether identity work was done at all rather than being an integrated part of a systemic whole. One was critical of her colleagues when she said that most workers don't care about this aspect of their work and that she didn't think most of them could explain what

identity means. This cynical view was borne out by the young people's responses. Most respondents confirmed a lack of identity work in social workers interactions with them. It was only through the efforts of individual carers who thought this important and took unilateral action '*my foster carer who is Jamaican made me realise both sides [of my family] are important by doing her family tree and she made all three of us get involved with this. She paid for us to search our family tree – it was good for me to see both sides. It made me more interested in how my mum grew up in Jamaica*". This was from a dual heritage young person who was estranged from her birth parents and was in need of information about her origins. All of the social workers statements viewed the system they operate in as actively working against doing quality work with black looked after children: *"The whole system needs a re-boot from the top to the bottom. There's too much pressure on workers, unmanageably high caseloads and less time to do quality work, we're just trying to avoid burnout and experienced workers are leaving."(SW04, Female, black Caribbean).* This is consistent with other studies cited in Chapter 2 (Allain, 2007) which found that big caseloads are a threat to good culturally aware social work, workers under pressure cut corners and in-depth direct work suffers. It also meant that children's voices were drowned out by the need for expediency.

How far the system facilitates quality work was also a theme picked up by Richards (2000) and Barn (1993). Richards views the assessment frameworks that social workers use as getting in the way of quality face to face work in that it hinders the relationship while Barn (ibid) notes a lack of preventative work being applied to black families. She found black families underwent an inferior experience in their dealings with social services. More recently the same author noted a lack of cultural sensitivity by those around black and dual heritage looked after young people (Barn et al, 2005). Together with the testimonies from the practitioners these findings highlight an urgent need for policy makers and employers to review the pressures on workers, as the clear message is they are unable to deliver a quality experience for LAC in the current practice framework as it exists.

5.4: Theme 3: Surviving Schooling

Definition: This theme refers to the experiences the participants had during their school years. The entire sample of looked after young people reported being labelled as having behavioural problems, which for most resulted in them attending a form of alternative schooling. School was a place where stereotypes and generalisations were applied to respondents, which included being pitied, to assuming that they were of low intellect and presented a behavioural threat. Stigma and labelling was a particularly strong theme in the context of schooling.

5.4.1: Sub-theme 1: Behaviour and Exclusions

In the opinion of Fletcher (1993) the effect of being in care is most clearly visible in relation to schooling. For respondents this held true and all reported that for them school was a tough emotional ordeal to get through and was described as 'horrible' and the 'most embarrassing thing in the world'. They reported being labelled as troublemakers, being singled out for differential treatment, stereotyped as being low achievers and as stigmatised for being in care. These feelings were echoed by user voices in the reported literature (Skuse and Ward 2003, Harker et al 2004). It must be noted that only one of the respondents entered care initially for behavioural reasons where others were admitted for family breakdown and neglect, or for abuse. However, once in care, existing emotional problems are often compounded (not least through separation and loss, multiple placements and change of carers) as these children also have to contend with problems arising from their new status as a looked after young person. Hence it is not so much what they bring rather how they are then helped and supported from that point on. Schooling is an inescapable part of that support but too often fails in that role.

Respondents directly attributed some of their behavioural problems to the effects of their treatment by teachers and peers. Three respondents told of fighting whenever a

fellow pupil mentioned their birth mother as a way of discouraging anyone else from mentioning their situation. This meant they were identified as having a behavioural problem by the school, which had the effect of converting their 'troublemaker' label into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Involvement in conflict and fighting inevitably led respondents down the slippery slope of exclusions followed by referral to a PRU. Social workers on the whole were unsurprised at the numbers of black children in care who were also in a PRU. The explanation given was that these young people have large emotional burdens to contend with which renders the typical school subjects as not the most important item on their agenda. Certainly researchers are becoming more interested in the emotional component of learning (Cameron and Maginn, 2008, Gallagher and Green, 2012). Specific research with looked after children from diverse backgrounds confirmed that feelings play a big part in whether these children are emotionally ready and able to learn. Gallagher and Green (2012) reported that children feel that no one understands them, then they feel isolated, unable to concentrate and unprepared to learn.

Developmentally a pattern emerges from the responses of participants in this study: most reported getting into trouble or becoming angrier as they got older. Some reported relatively trouble free primary school experiences and deteriorating school experiences from year 8 onwards. That is, once in secondary school. This may be linked to increasing awareness of their situation now that the protection of dealing with one teacher and relatively few children was removed. In addition, the exposure to older children and many more of them, coupled with sexual maturity and entering the developmental stage of adolescence may exert additional pressure on the emotional wellbeing of looked after children in secondary school. Martin and Jackson (2002) who investigated the factors leading to educational success for looked after young people reported their sample as citing the place of encouragement from a significant other as being vital to their success. Support is essential but offers no guarantee of success as illustrated by one respondent who told a story about how one carer came to her school and sat in on her lessons in an effort to get her to focus and this was interpreted as the carer showing genuine concern and caring but had little effect on the educational outcomes for the respondent.

Many tried to hide the fact they were in care and for some others insensitive teachers or carers thwarted them in this aim. Respondents had numerous anecdotes about the lack of confidentiality and sensitivity from teachers and carers. These included one school announcing over the school tannoy that a young person's foster carer was in school to see them; to teachers leaving the school register open for other pupils to read; carers arriving at school dressed in traditional African costume which then became a source of mockery and deep embarrassment for the child concerned particularly since she was dual heritage. Black and dual heritage children in care have to deal with the added dimension of being stereotyped and subject to low expectations of behaviour and achievements layered on top of existing low expectations as a result of their ethnicity. One respondent felt she was depersonalised to the extent that she felt like a statistic and spoke of the experience almost changing her personality and temperament. As such near the end of their schooling most respondents report having virtually stopped attending. Martin and Jackson (2002) argued that teachers should be more sympathetic towards looked after children and recognise that they have additional needs. The authors suggest that often it is just making time to listen to young people. Respondents on the whole agree, but do not want to be singled out as special and so this will have to be done sensitively and in conjunction with the young person's wishes.

The passage above contextualises findings elsewhere that negative relationships with teachers can result in heavy penalties for certain groups of young people (Brooks and Goldstein, 2008; Holland, 2008). In relation to the research questions these findings are significant in regards to the position of schooling as a main gateway to developing social capital, friends, qualifications, links into the community and leisure pursuits. The poor outcomes of schooling for all of the sample group is not untypical of the LAC population as a whole, where school, rather than being a haven and source of stability, merely adds to their emotional turmoil (Borland et al, 1998). In the wider context the poor outcomes for this group represent a failure at corporate level (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004) including a failure of agencies to effectively work together (Weilding, 2005) and instil some stability in the lives of these young people (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004). The tendency of teachers to stereotype these young people as underachievers and potential troublemakers, as reported by the young people in this study, hinders efforts at the school level for change. Similarly, the high exclusion

rates of the sample are a wider problem for society, for LAC in general and black and dual heritage LAC in particular. Especially as the system has been found to be racist in operation by the very people who run it (DfES, 2006), who singled out the issue of exclusions in particular as being an iconic issue for black Caribbeans (ibid).

The experience of poor schooling in this study was the same for dual heritage young people and black young people. Tickly et al (2004) found much the same in reporting that the barriers to school achievement for mixed race (white/black Caribbean) group was the same as those for black Caribbean pupils and that these reasons included social disadvantage, institutionalised racism, low teacher expectation and high school exclusion rates. But Tickly (ibid) further observed that dual heritage pupils experienced racism at school from teachers *and* peers, both black and white. To illustrate the depth of the problem teachers interviewed in that study located the problems of mixed race pupils as coming from within the children themselves due to identity issues. Tickly et al (ibid) therefore illustrates starkly how teacher racism as part of an institutionally embedded racism interacts with peer judgment leading to a downward spiral of poor achievement and exclusions for mixed race children in the study.

Only two respondents spoke of attaining any kind of qualifications by the end of schooling. In this they bucked a trend that is stacked heavily against them. The literature confirms that being black, being male having special needs and being eligible for free school meals means that pupils are 168 times more likely to be permanently excluded from a state-funded school than a white girl without special needs from a middle class family (The Children's Commissioner, 2012). Being black alone is enough to tip the attainment scales against a young person (Strand, 2015). The odds are probably higher as the list assumed that the black child was in the community with their birth parents. Many researchers, including the Government's own appointed ministers (DfES, 2006), have branded the education system racist.

Social work respondents on the whole reported awareness of the importance of schooling for these children. They reported that young people prefer them not to visit

their school during school hours or if so, done not to make it obvious that they are there for them. Young people from Martin and Jackson's study (2002) reflected the same sentiments, going as far as saying that social workers should not even meet LAC on school premises so they are never singled out as being different. One worker felt that her visits to school were interpreted by a young person as being checked up on – which might be true unless the worker was summoned by the school due to concerns about behaviour.

Social workers also spoke of the difficulty they had in getting schools to provide extra support for this group of young people. They reported that schools were more ready to stereotype young people as trouble makers than to offer support. This is supported by the study from Gayle and McClung (2014) who found the school experiences of their looked-after respondents to be characterised by exclusion, low teacher expectation and insensitivity. The literature reports that efforts from professionals encouraging school attendance, taking an interest in school work and encouraging young people to do their homework and try their best bears fruit (Martin and Jackson, 2002, Barn et al 2005). It also reports that the default position appears to be one of indifference and a lack of encouragement, especially for those in residential care (Harker et al 2004).

5.4.2: Sub-theme 2: Stigma and labelling

All of the respondents' statements indicated that stigma had an impact on many aspects of their lives and as such this subtheme cuts across all other themes. Statements mentioned respondents being judged as being 'trouble' and one respondent said they were bullied everywhere they went and of attempting to avoid this stigma by not telling anyone that they were in care. The lack of awareness and sensitivity on the part of teachers to this was described by one respondent as '*naïve*'. This respondent felt teachers should be aware of how they feel as looked after children and be more sensitive to their needs. For her it was unacceptable that some teachers were of the view that children were in care because of their bad behaviour. The call for more sensitivity from teachers and less labelling finds support in a

number of studies reviewed (A National Voice, 2002, Harker et al 2004 and Martin and Jackson 2002).

Buchanan (1995) calls the stigma of looked after children the 'X' factor in young people's self-esteem. Elsewhere institutional racism in schooling was called the 'X' factor in black pupils' achievement and exclusion rates (DfES, 2006). Hence black looked after children in school can be said to suffer from a double dose of 'X' factors. And while they can't hide their race the respondents in this study, save one, all tried to conceal the fact of their looked after status. This links to low self-esteem and emotional wellbeing in a number of ways. First, the anxiety produced is constant with one respondent describing their emotions as being '*all over the place'* and suggesting that if he was with his 'proper' family he would be able to concentrate in school more (Although, this may be an idealisation on this young person' part). Secondly, these young people felt there was no confidentiality and that everyone knew their business as a looked after child which they disliked. A further link between stigma and low self-esteem is the pity that some peers and adults displayed on hearing that a respondent was looked after. The news would evoke pity, which almost the entire sample group said they 'hated' as it would mark them out as being different - at a key developmental stage in their lives when the need to fit in predominates. Questions about their birth parents together with assumptions that they must be to blame for being looked-after in some way, was reported as being hard to deal with so an easier route was to not let anyone know of their status.

5.5: Summary of Chapter

The significance of the findings in relation to the research questions suggests potential priority issues to improve the well-being of the target group. Young people are clear that that their experiences being looked-after lacked emotional depth and quality and for many they are able to reflect on the implications for their current functioning that these experiences have often describing themselves as damaged. Social workers also conceded that they have focused on material practicalities over emotional relationships but ascribe this largely to systemic failure rather than individual failure.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that whilst black and dual heritage young people deal with many of the issues that all looked after young people face, there are additional and different issues around the major and minor themes identified which need to be understood by policy makers and practitioners. In relation to research question number one the discussion suggests a radical new approach to looking after children in which sufficient specialist foster carers are recruited, trained and supported to identify emotional and psychological distress in young people and to provide culturally appropriate warmth and affection. Continued failure to do so can lead to an increase in placement breakdowns and unnecessary emotional disturbance of the young people involved. A number of authors support this recommendation (Baumrind, 1993; Chase et al, 2006; Rohner, 2004) and emphasise the importance of emotional wellbeing in school success, personal self-concept and identity development. Racial matching as an issue was supported by most of the young people in this study with others preferring any ethnic background of carer as long as they were genuine in their affections. Social workers support the position articulated by the young people and confirm that they match placements where they can, they also support matching for ethnicity of social workers with young people on the grounds that that will foster better understanding of racial and cultural needs

The challenge is for local authorities in ensuring that they recruit sufficient suitable foster carers of all backgrounds to match the demographics of their looked after population. They then have to develop the professional capabilities of these carers to recognise and respond to problems affecting the emotional wellbeing of these young people. Safeguarding black and dual heritage looked after young people from poor corporate parenting, which is experienced as inconsistent, cold, neglectful or abusive, can enhance the development of secure attachment. Being black, these young people also have to contend with the effects of racism and cultural insensitivity from carers (Barn et al, 2005) and teachers (Holland, 2008). Local authorities that can meet the needs of this group will be acting to promote important protective factors for the child's emotional wellbeing and long-term social adjustment.

The findings name schools, and more specifically teachers, as a professional group that is repeatedly mentioned as needing increased awareness and sensitivity to the needs of looked after young people (Holland, 2008, Francis, 2000). The result of

teacher insensitivity and lack of confidentiality is an increase in anxiety and a lack of confidence on the part of LAC, which further reinforces school as a stigmatizing experience. Teachers emerge as largely ignorant about the emotional needs of looked after children and this is an area perhaps where social workers have an educational role to play in raising the awareness of teachers in this regard. Carers also need to recognise this fact as well as social workers as the point was made that both need to be more careful in their sharing of personal information when working with looked-after young people. Teachers also need to address their reported tendency to prejudge these children as underachievers and troublemakers (Gayle and McClung, 2014), such labels can be the basis for self-fulfilling prophecies. Young people in this sample also report being emotionally unprepared to learn and of finding it difficult to concentrate due to the emotional load of being looked after.

What emerges from all respondents then is a sense of sadness and anger at their experiences. Whilst some respondents were more eloquent than others on their experiences all conveyed frustration at a system they became part of mostly through no fault of their own. The findings underlines the importance of listening to the voices of this vulnerable group as they provide the most authentic way of gaining a better understanding of their needs and therefore of informing more appropriate practice interventions. There is no shortage of legislation and exhortations urging people to listen to looked after young people (UNCRC, 1989; DfES, 2006) but young people's ability to influence services they receive is questioned (Tisdall and Davis, 2004).

For this sample emotional trauma manifested itself in a number of ways. Indicators included severe behavioural problems, which worsened as they moved through the school years; inability to feel or give emotion; defiance; delinquency; feelings of isolation and a sense of abandonment. One issue that stood out for the young people in this study was the quality of foster carers which led them to question whether paying someone to look after another person is the correct motivation to use. This issue was significant enough to become a major theme in this study due not only to the number of times it was mentioned by different respondents but the way the sentiment infused other responses which signalled to the author that this was an

important issue to highlight prominently in the analysis. It was clear that respondents felt that the payment of carers sent contradictory messages in regards to having someone genuinely care about another person.

A striking feature of the social workers accounts was their degree of support for what the young respondents were saying. The system in which they work was found wanting in a number of ways by the social workers. Their main concern was their inability to provide continuity of service, which regardless of reason for no longer working with a young person, was interpreted as 'abandoning' the young person. Policymakers therefore have to find a way to ensure that once a worker is assigned to a young person this connection holds good until either the child leaves care or the worker leaves the employ of the authority. All of the young people (save one) had multiple placements and this combined with high social worker turnover served to compound the sense of abandonment and isolation, which many young people reported. High staff turnover is a significant barrier to quality work with this group of young people (Gaskell, 2010) as it acts against the development of sustained, deep and meaningful relationships.

The findings also stressed the need for workers to appreciate the importance of long-term relationships to the child, especially with birth parents and other relatives as this may be the only route to identity formation for the young person and hence access to social capital that family and relatives can bring. Findings suggest also that practitioners need to be careful in their placement decisions and include the voice of the young person to a greater extent. Where individual workers hold a political orientation to a 'same race' placement they need to ensure young people are consulted and resist ascribing a black identity to dual heritage looked after people. In relation to this, workers need to resist assuming heterogeneity amongst black carers, as the clear message from young people is that different ethnicities, even if racially black, make a big a difference to young people's placement experiences. Thus, a more sophisticated understanding of racial politics is indicated perhaps through training.

Training was also highlighted as being necessary for social workers and carers on therapeutic strategies to use in their day-to-day interactions. This should incorporate a

range of relevant theories including Attachment, Post-Traumatic stress, Social Learning, System theory and Parental Acceptance Rejection theory. Knowledge of a range of different interventions approaches increases the practitioner's ability to better tailor their services to the individual young person and family.

Practice frameworks as defined by Connelly (2007) provide the means through which theory, research and practice can be connected to support positive outcomes in service provision. Social workers narratives were largely critical of the systems behind them as not supporting them in meeting the needs of black and dual heritage LAC largely through the imposition of high caseloads and through their employers paying 'lip service' to issues such as identity work. These messages are aimed at the policy development level and must be heeded otherwise current practice will continue which means it will be hit or miss for young people whether they get a worker sufficiently committed to do additional work with them especially in the area of identity. The need for policy on this issue for the wider social work workforce is that other practitioners may not be so committed to do this work unless it is mandated as an essential part of their role.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1: Introduction

This study set out to give voice to black and dual heritage looked after young people through exploring how their care experiences impacted on their emotional wellbeing. In the light of the increased attention given to the mental health of looked after children and young people in general, this study sought to add to the limited numbers of studies focusing specifically on the experiences of black and dual heritage looked after young people. The omission in knowledge about this group was regarded as important to investigate for a number of reasons: first black and dual heritage looked after young people are disproportionately represented in the numbers of children in care and the lack of attention to their particular needs results in their needs going unmet. Second, given the context of societal racism combined with stigma and labelling as a result of their looked-after status this group is rendered especially vulnerable. And as a social work academic, a social worker and a black man the wish to address this gap in knowledge in how better to meet their needs presents as a moral imperative. Finally, the knowledge that existing policy and practice is not based on the best evidence in relation to this group stimulated a wish to add, however modestly, to the limited evidence in existence.

The research was designed to address the following questions:

- *How does the experience of being looked after impact on the emotional well-being of black and dual heritage looked after young people?*

- *How do practice frameworks, and professional interventions impact on the emotional well–being in this population?*

Using the theoretical framework of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis as discussed in Chapter 3 a number of key themes were identified and emerged from the interpretive analysis: 1) Emotional Unavailability 2) Ethnicity 3) Surviving School. Seven sub-themes also emerged: 1) Emotions 2) Social Worker Qualities 3) Nine to Fivers 4) Feeling Isolated 5) Identity 6) Behaviour and Exclusions 7) Stigma and Labelling

The aim of this chapter is to review the main conclusions from the research and to highlight the significance of the findings for knowledge in this area. It will do this through considering the themes that emerged from the analysis and interpretation of respondent's experiences of being looked after and reflect on them in light of their relevance to each of the research questions posed in Chapter 1 and with reference to key points from the literature review in Chapter 2. Issues relating to the choice of methodology will be reviewed including my reflections on the limitations of methods and stages of the study followed by recommendations for different key professionals, schools and local authority policies. Recommendations for future research are given as well as consideration of the theoretical implications arising from the data. I then proceed to make clear the original contribution the study makes to knowledge in this area. Final reflections on the overall study are offered by way of closing.

6.2: Research Question 1

- *How does the experience of being looked after impact on the emotional well-being of black and dual heritage looked after young people?*

The narratives of the looked after young people involved in the study highlight how their experiences of being in care are characterised by: emotionally barren carers; a care career marked by feelings of isolation; poor school experiences and having to deal with insensitive teachers; a variable quality of relationships and contact with social workers, and a general lack of attention paid to their ethnicity.

Each of the themes and subthemes contained material pertinent to how the respondents experienced being looked after and how this impacted on them emotionally - including their psychological and social wellbeing. The experience of the respondents in this study validates the proposition that for black and dual heritage young people, being looked after can impact on their emotional wellbeing negatively. The implications of a lack of culturally appropriate warmth and affection in their care holds consequences for these young people. The perception of a lack of authentically warm relationships with their carers is of concern. External behaviours might suggest to an observer that LAC emotional needs are being met but young people report carers presenting two faces: one to the social worker and one to them. Perceptions are reality for the young people, and are often based on experiences of differential treatment from foster carers of other young people in the same household as them. The reported behavioural problems of young people, their lack of empathy, inability to feel and express positive emotions appeared often in the narratives and was supported by the literature (Howe, 2005, Rohner, 2004). All children in care experience similar treatment but, drawing on the findings, this study shows that for black or dual heritage LAC, their experiences of society's institutions are qualitatively different from other young people (it is likely that other minority groups also suffer discrimination but this has not been investigated). There is a great deal of evidence attesting to the negative views and behaviour based on racism in the wider society and particular institutions (e.g. McPherson, 1999). Perhaps due to their marginalisation in society researchers have largely ignored the particular needs of this group, with most studies adopting a largely colour-blind methodology, which colludes in masking racial disparities. Few studies are aimed directly at increasing knowledge about the needs of this particular group, and fewer draw on the voices of people from this demographic as part of their methodology. However, there have been notable

exceptions: Allain, (2007), Aymer and Okitikpi (2010), Robinson, (2000), Barn et al, (2005), Dogra, 2002) Graham, (2007), Owusu-Bempah, (2005).

As an example, although all looked after young people experience labelling and stigma to some degree, black and dual heritage looked after young people uniquely also have to contend with racial stereotypes and prejudice arising from their skin colour and ethnicity. The effects of being in care are most clearly visible in relation to schooling argued Fletcher (1993). This is borne out in relation to black and dual heritage young people where racism and exclusions (Gilborn, 2000, DfES, 2006), instability (Barn et al, 2005) and low expectations (Barnados, 2006) of LAC combine resulting in detrimental experiences and outcomes. Although some young people report positive school experiences (Harper et al, 2006, Shaw, 1998) findings in this study confirm that respondents experience school as a trial and that almost all fail to get through it without being provided with some form of alternative provision to the mainstream. Only one respondent entered care as a result of their behaviour, and while it is possible to develop behavioural problems as a result of the circumstances that led to them entering care initially, the majority of respondents report becoming angrier as they pass through the school years. This suggests that schools are not effective enough in targeting LAC and providing effective support as part of their 'corporate parent' role. Indeed, some schools exacerbate looked after young people's problems. Poor school experience and the failure of corporate parents to prioritise education are seen as significant issues in the recurrence of poor outcomes for LAC (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004).

Where school provides little respite to the LAC sample one might hope that their home lives provide an emotional refuge. However, this was the case for only one of the ten young people interviewed. An aspect of this emerged as a subtheme, that is, in having no one to confide in when 'feeling down' emotionally. Isolation and loneliness punctuated by seclusion and at times quarantine like experiences were described. Psychological exclusion from the family was reinforced for most by physical exclusion from key rooms in the household, which further reinforced messages of rejection. This behaviour on the part of carers seemed largely unchecked and when reported often resulted in the young person being moved. Social workers narratives revealed awareness of such behaviour alongside a powerlessness to do anything about

it. One worker complained formally about a carer when this behaviour was reported but she was unclear about whether any action followed her complaint.

The evidence from LAC narratives is complex as to whether they fared better (as regards their emotional wellbeing) if placed with carers who matched their race and/or ethnicity. Matching was favoured by the LAC sample for a number of reasons: it was easier to pass the family off as their own (which aided a sense of belonging) and matching carers might mean that there could be a greater degree of political understanding from the carer as to LAC racialised position in society. The feeling that one 'fits' in a family came across as a strong desire from the sample for same race placements and has support from the literature (Duncalf, 2010). Being placed with someone who understands what it is like for black and dual heritage youth in this society meets some needs in terms of not feeling awkward and learning how to handle prejudice and discrimination. However, it was clear from responses that carers, even when matched for race, needed to offer more than a black skin.

The black social workers interviewed in this study were largely committed to same race placements – more so than the young people in this study. In this it can be said that the young people and social workers were in agreement.

6.3: Research Question 2

- *How do practice frameworks, and professional interventions impact on the emotional well–being of black and dual heritage looked after children and young people?*

The findings indicate how attending to the task of promoting the emotional wellbeing of black and dual heritage LAC is hindered by existing practice frameworks and professional interventions. One of the main areas identified in this analysis is the lack of stability experienced in placements and with social workers. Lack of stability in social work staff is identified as a barrier against quality social work as it prevents the

development of long term relationships (Gaskell, 2010). Similarly, a lack of stability in foster care placements reduces the opportunities to develop secure attachments and may exacerbate existing emotional or behavioural difficulties (Schofield and Beek, 2005). Although there are a number of reasons why a placement can break down, instability often relates to lack of proper assessment and matching at the time of placement. Respondents reported not being consulted, and social workers reported not having the luxury of choice when placing LAC due to the emergency nature of some of the placements and/or the shortage of suitable carers to match LAC with. These are systemic problems, that in theory, can be overcome by the LA ensuring they have sufficient carers to match young people; by the LA ensuring its workers have a caseload that is consistent with building long term relationships with LAC, and by the LA having a clear policy, known to all its social workers, on same race placements. It was notable that none of the social workers interviewed in this study were aware of any such policies.

Practice frameworks seem to act as a straightjacket for the social workers who complained of not being enabled to meet the needs of this group in the manner they would wish. They complained about being prevented from doing direct work by high caseloads and, although no one mentioned it by name, managerialism was implicated. Managerialism is seen to be operating when practitioners' success is measured in terms of whether organisational needs have been met rather than the needs of children and families. The result for creative work and direct work with children is often greatly reduced (Munro, 2001). These complaints chime with Munro's review of social work with children and families (Munro, 2011) which described social work practice as 'over-bureaucratised' and 'over prescribed' and recommended that practice move away from being focused on bureaucratic compliance towards one based on developing quality relationships, and establishing organisational learning cultures.

Evidence shows that when LAC are placed with carers who identify with their culture and identity and see it as important, young people are supported, feel included and valued. By promoting the child's self-concept, and showing a genuine interest in them as black LAC this helps young people to feel more comfortable in the placement, which in turn promotes stability. A good match between LAC and foster carers also

promotes attachment and bonding on both sides and contributes to the emotional wellbeing of the young person. Racial matching was an issue for most young people and social workers (not only for matching carers but for matching workers also). However, the situation is more complex than matching black with black and white with white. There are subtle nuances involved in this issue of matching for ethnicity and the voice of the child is conspicuous by its absence. Findings from this study suggest that placements made on skin colour alone need careful consideration. As reported above young people need to feel that they 'fit' physically within a family to avoid feeling 'awkward' in public but skin colour should not be the sole criterion used for placement decisions as this will miss additional needs of the young people. Dual heritage looked after young people especially need to be heard in this debate as they have complained, in this study and others, of workers pathologising and problematising them as well as making assumptions about their identity. This is where the local authority planning need to combine to ensure there are enough black and dual heritage foster carers in the right locations to match young people with.

Narratives from LAC and social workers in this study have highlighted how the complex relationships between social workers and LAC have led to less than optimal outcomes. Young people in this study reported wanting more quality contact from social workers at the same time as reporting their disappointment with them. One of their main issues was that workers could not be relied upon to stay around long enough to form a trusting relationship. There was evidence from at least one social worker that LAC were becoming 'jaded' and many could barely make an attempt to get to know her in the expectation that she would soon be gone. This very much accords to a phenomenon Gaskell (2010) identified, which he termed the '*reciprocal relationship of mistrust'* that characterises such attitudes *(p.143).*

In addition, findings indicate that LAs pay 'lip service' to acting in the best interest of the child and that the reality often contradicts the ambition. Social workers accused their own employers of acting against their wish to better meet the needs of black and dual heritage LAC by overloading them with work, which acts against the development of quality relationships. Allain (2007) found much the same when reporting that her respondents cut corners and being unable to do the in-depth work they wanted to do, due to high case load pressures. LAC respondents in this study for

the most part confirmed that identity work was not done with them at all other than in rare occasions through a committed individual carer or worker. In other words, it was not done systematically and relied on the inclination of the professional involved. This is clearly an area that could be more systematically addressed through training, and in strengthening expectations of the role of foster carer and social worker regarding practice with LAC and young people.

The findings from the study concerning the role of the professionals in schools, indicates the importance of the school environment and its potential for the promotion of LAC emotional wellbeing. However, as the findings indicate LAC are subject to experiences that suggest that schools need to review how they view LAC; how they view black and dual heritage pupils, and to review the nature of partnership working between teachers, social workers and foster carers for the impact on LAC. Teachers emerge as judgemental, insensitive and too ready to apply unthinking stereotypes to LAC. There is a history of poor communication and low expectations but the situation may have been exacerbated by the additional demands on schools – and pressures on teachers – which have accompanied the process of marketisation of schools that creates competition between schools. This process holds implications for teacher-pupil interactions (Phillips, 2011), as schools become under pressure to select pupils they feel will help them if they want a good league table position. Groups of young people, such as travellers, black children, children in care and children with Special Educational Needs are not viewed as desirable in this regard. Addressing this process will need to involve the training of teachers to help them become politically aware of these processes that can lead to viewing groups of children in a negative light and the impact this has on the life chances of those young people. Additional areas for intervention includes how schools are managed and on the wider scale, an alternative ideological approach to running a school system from one based on competition to a more collaborative model.

The absence of the voice of the child has been referred to at several points in this study and runs counter to policy (DfES 2006, The Children Act, 1989). Decisions on placement, carers and schools are described as taking place around the child in many cases without their full participation, in a manner that renders them invisible. Good practice in this regard needs strengthening by local authorities to ensure carers and

social workers demonstrate that they have taken the voice of the child into consideration in their decision making.

6.4: Limitations of the Research

IPA in providing the main theoretical and analytical framework appeared to be particularly suited to this study as it was consistent with the research aims, which were concerned with exploring the meaning of the experience for black and dual heritage LAC. My epistemological position and the methodological procedures of IPA outlined in Chapter 3 were believed to be complementary to, and consistent with, the research aims, in that IPA is committed to an idiographic level of analysis which has a focus on the particular rather than the general. This connects closely with hermeneutic phenomenology, which stresses the interpretive aspect of the approach. This approach not only allowed the young people to speak freely about their care experiences but it offered a richness and depth that would have been more difficult to achieve with less idiographic methods. Also inherent in this choice was an awareness of my personal views and preconceptions regarding being black and in care. I have not spent time in care personally but have worked with looked after young people as a residential worker and social worker and have acquired professional knowledge and practice experience. It would therefore be difficult for me to achieve an objective stance, and rather than attempt to 'bracket' this knowledge, in using Hermeneutic IPA this has allowed me to reflect on my experiences in relation to respondents' narratives leading to the co-construction of the findings. My knowledge and experience of working with black and dual heritage looked after young people inevitably influenced my interpretation.

However, some would criticise such an insider stance and consequently, I acknowledge that the results from the current study are based on my interpretations and that it is possible that other researchers may have found other relevant factors. In hindsight, the current study might have benefitted from undergoing respondent validation, that is, allowing participants to read through the data and analyses and

provide feedback on my interpretations of their responses. This would have provided me with a method of checking for any inconsistencies and assumptions, and provided me with an opportunity to re-analyse my data. For example, I could have held feedback sessions with each participant, where he or she would be given the opportunity to comment on the transcript and themes to see if my findings accurately represented their experiences. However, given the number of missed appointments and the unsettled nature of some of the respondent's lifestyle this would have threatened the viability of the study in terms of timescales. Another way to strengthen the validity of the study was to triangulate the data using another data source, (which was the chosen route, in regards to interviewing a small number of social workers).

The limitations of IPA as an approach and why it was chosen over more positivistic approaches have been discussed in Chapter 3. The following section extends that discussion under a number of relevant headings:

6.4.1: Selection of Participants

This research involved a relatively small purposive sample size of black and dual heritage care experienced young people and therefore the results are not readily generalizable to wider populations. IPA as an idiographic approach (Smith et al, 2009): it is not concerned with making generalisations rather it is concerned with eliciting rich descriptions of experience from individuals. Having said that it is possible that the results may have potential transferability to other groups of vulnerable young people and resonate elsewhere. Respondents were recruited through an intermediary using volunteers. It is possible that those who volunteer to speak to researchers are likely to be those who are doing relatively well in care as those who are receiving treatment, involved in criminality, or addicted will be harder to reach, potentially indicating recruitment bias. Also, where a purposive sample is used and social workers choose the sample, as was the case here, the researcher loses control of selecting the sample and bias may enter in this way also. Steps were taken to ameliorate this by being clear with the social worker that the criteria needed to be adhered to and that I was willing to interview respondents she felt may be 'risky' due

to their temperament in order to avoid focusing only on those young people who staff felt were 'safe' and well balanced with no external manifestation of any problem or issue. Additional safeguards regarding venue were taken nonetheless with those young people presenting potential risks to the researcher.

Due to the vulnerability of the sample population and requirements of the local authorities' research committees', affecting access to young people in foster care, I experienced significant problems initially with recruitment. This then led to a change in methodology essentially raising the age of the sample sought from 11-16 to 16-24 and dropping the data gathering method of focus group. Raising the age of respondents proved successful in generating a sample who were now able to give consent themselves following an introduction through their leaving care manager. Even though my age range now was from 16-24 all respondents were aged over 18 which simplified issues of consent further. In hindsight, if I were to conduct this study again, I would not seek to gain access to younger age range of LAC as local authority barriers to this are formidable and extremely time consuming. Access to the social workers was more straightforward and presented no barriers.

The size of the LAC sample was ten. Smith and Osborn (2003) recommends sample sizes for IPA of between three and six given that the IPA aims to say something about the group rather than make general claims. As IPA is idiographic in nature, small sample sizes appear to be more appropriate as they allow for the in-depth analysis of individual cases and experiences. Five social workers were included in the study to provide context to the views of the LAC. The entire sample of social workers comprised black and dual heritage females, which is perhaps indicative of the existing ratio of men to women in social work, but may not reflect the racial composition of the workforce. The limitation here may be that, given that all of the workers were black females, it is possible that a black male social worker (or a white professional, male or female) may have had a different perspective on the questions asked.

6.4.2: Data Collection and Analysis

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In using IPA I was interested in identifying what mattered to black and dual heritage LAC and believed that this is best achieved through listening to them and analysing the language they use to describe their experiences. This is consistent with my personal values and theoretical approach of social constructionism where the role of language is central in revealing meaning. This approach in part relies on participants having the ability to articulate, possibly complex, thoughts and feelings. Willig (2013) argues that it is in fact a great challenge to communicate the intricate details of experiences, especially when people are not accustomed to talking in such a way. Willig (Ibid) therefore argues that, through language, researchers can only gain an understanding of how people talk about their experiences rather than an understanding of the actual experience. However, Smith and Osborn (2008) argue that there is a direct relationship between how people talk about their experiences and the thoughts and feelings surrounding them. The IPA researcher therefore analyses talk to gain an understanding of how participants are making sense of their experiences (Smith, 2011). I agree with this view and believe that the strength in allowing first person narrative is that, however articulate they may or may not be, individual choice of words reveal much and my interpretation of this is best served where respondents feel natural and comfortable to use the language they choose to describe their experiences. Another strength of this approach lies in the similarity between the researcher and the sample since I share the same racial background of all black respondents, which affords me the opportunity to 'tune in' to their speech subtleties and pick up points that may have been lost on someone not aware of these subtle inflections. This observation holds good for the dual heritage respondents also, as their use of language did not differ from that used by the black respondents. Thus, even though I acknowledge the critique outlined by Willig (2013), I take the position that through language I can learn something about how the participants' descriptions of their experiences match their reality.

The decision to change the methodology by not including a focus group may have influenced the messages received, as respondents can influence each other in discussion in ways that may not emerge in a face-to-face interview. For example, if the same LAC and social work professionals had participated in the focus groups this

may have given them the opportunity to revise or amplify some of the comments they had made in the individual interviews. This possible advantage needs to be weighed up against the advantage of interviewing different people who were not influenced by any previous contact with the researcher and who therefore brought a fresh perspective to the discussion. In addition, not all young people are comfortable talking in a group about issues which are personal to them. Furthermore, the disadvantage of coordinating a meeting involving all ten young people, given the problems encountered arranging to meet each individual, was a daunting prospect and success was not guaranteed.

For the interviews a pilot of the topic guide was used during the first interviews with the young people and modified slightly for subsequent interviews to include areas that the young people raised. This resulted in a few small amendments. It is important to note that the semi-structured interview was designed as a topic guide rather than to dictate the interview direction. This flexibility allowed me to engage in a dialogue, where initial questions were modified in light of participants' responses. Thus, I was able to explore any areas that were interesting and/or perhaps novel as they arose (Smith et al., 2009).

I was also mindful of potential limitations of using semi-structured interviews. There was the danger that respondents said what they thought I wanted to hear. In order to address this, I explained to participants that there are no correct answers and avoided asking leading questions. At the end of every interview I asked if there was anything they thought I had not asked that they thought was important. This gave them permission to go beyond the prompts. Interviews were conducted in privacy and as an experienced therapeutic practitioner interviewer I actively sought to establish rapport with each person drawing on my several years of experience as a social worker, youth worker and therapeutic social worker in a Child Guidance Unit.

The outcome of a successful IPA study includes an element of 'giving voice' (capturing and reflecting upon the principal claims and concerns of the research participants) and 'making sense' (offering an interpretation of this material, which is grounded in the account. Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis uses the participants' own terminology and

conceptualisations (Smith, 2004). The interview schedule was not followed rigidly and so not all questions were asked in each interview, nor were they always asked in the same order. Instead, participants were encouraged to speak freely and lead the direction of the discussions. Issues that seemed important to particular respondents were explored further.

6.5: Reflexivity in the Research Process

I recognise that my ontology and epistemology and my views about the importance of listening to and trying to understand the views of black and dual heritage LAC have shaped this research. These views will have influenced the methodology and the research questions thus affecting the findings. My pre-conceptions from my reading and professional experiences will have also influenced the design of the study, the questions I asked, my interpretation of the participants' narratives and the conclusions I draw. IPA`s double hermeneutic means that the identified themes emerged through my interpretation. Given this, I made numerous attempts to be rigorous and transparent in coding, for example reading and re-reading narratives to ensure accuracy of coding. I also tried to achieve methodological coherence and consistency in the extent to which the research fits with the underlying theoretical and epistemological assumptions of the approach (Yardley, 2000).

IPA assumes that in order to engage with other people's experience, researchers need to be able to identify and reflect upon their own experiences and assumptions. Hence, the limitations of the research concern my own presence and influence as the researcher. Willig (2008) states that personal reflexivity involves deliberate reflection on our values, experiences and beliefs, and in particular how these aspects of our identities have shaped the research process. I acknowledge my active role in the research process and declare my 'position' in order to support the need for transparency. Throughout my time working as a social worker, residential social worker and therapeutic social worker, I have been particularly interested in supporting

black and dual heritage looked after young people and promoting social justice. I believe that everyone has the right to succeed in life but that some children and young people need more support in order to achieve this. I take a keen interest in strategies and support mechanisms available to help black disadvantaged children and young people and continuously reflect on my practice with regard to my role in this. During my practice I have been particularly struck by the poor outcomes for black and dual heritage looked after young people. I believe that through this research I can raise awareness and understanding surrounding this vulnerable group, which will hopefully influence practice and therefore the outcomes for black and dual heritage Looked After Children.

It is likely that, in asking questions about race, my personal characteristics played a part. The responses may have been very different had I been a white male or female. In being of the same racial background to the respondents it is likely that this would have facilitated rapport and contributed to a more honest and genuine reflection on race issues as respondents might have felt more comfortable being critical of these areas and not worrying about giving offence.

Some of the LAC responses were sensitive and emotional and involved an element of intimate disclosure. Some of the young people appeared to have welcomed talking about these matters for the first time and hopefully felt comfortable talking about them to me. Indeed, one agreed to any follow up sessions that may have been requested (none were needed) by saying she 'liked' the researcher and would cooperate with him where she had not cooperated with any forum for LAC during her care career (For example, the Children in Care Council) as she felt they were a 'waste of time'. I used my professional experience in establishing rapport and creating a relaxed respectful ethos of trust before asking personal questions. However, I wondered whether their overwhelming negativity on the subject was as a result of them feeling that that is what I wanted to hear? In order to counter this I deliberately asked them what was it about being looked after that they enjoyed? Yet, almost all answered that there was nothing to report in this regard.

6.6: Implications

These recommendations are intended to give explicit direction to addressing the problems identified in the study. When considering these in relation to the literature, a number of implications for practice can tentatively be suggested in relation to the role of foster carers, social workers, schools and teachers and employers. The following recommendations aim to address some of these implications arising from the research findings. They are presented under the headings of foster carers, social workers, schools and teachers and local authorities.

6.6.1: Foster Carers:

The study indicates that foster carers need to take seriously the idea of developing culturally appropriate ways of meeting the emotional needs of black and dual heritage children placed with them. Black foster carers whose ethnicity differ from the child's need to work on this aspect also. One way this training can be delivered is through using Cameron and Maginn's (2008) 'Pillars of Parenting'. This approach empowers professional staff to engage with LAC therapeutically to promote authentic warmth and as such should be required training for both initial and more experienced foster carers and social workers. Foster carers also need to be mindful that black and dual heritage LAC will not automatically give or respond to efforts aimed at establishing warm relations due to their past experiences. Carers need to build resilience in this, supported by knowledge that would enable them to explain the behaviour they observe. Training in psychologically orientated knowledge is indicated here, which should include Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, Social Learning Theory and from the behaviourist perspective. Theories about attachment, and critical child development (with an emphasis on identifying areas of similarities and differences of development for black children and other groups of children) should also be included in such training.

Foster carers should include black and dual heritage looked after young people in all aspects of their family life. Too many reports were received in this study where young

people were forbidden from entering certain parts of the house or from holding a front door key. This is unlikely to promote feelings of belonging. Carers need to make especial efforts to treat black and dual heritage foster children the same as they do their own children. These children have finely tuned antennae that pick up insincerity and differential treatment and carers need to be mindful of this and persist in the face of rejection, as LAC are likely to test the sincerity and good intentions of carers. Foster carers also need to encourage black and dual heritage looked after children in their education, whether or not the foster carers themselves had a successful educational career. Carers need to assume that school is important to LAC in the knowledge that for most young people it holds the key to their future success and wellbeing; as such carers need to prioritise it and show the LAC that they take education seriously. Finally, foster carers need to take risks with the black and dual heritage young people they look after. This means they need not always report them to police when, for example, acting out or running away does not put them at risk of harm. Foster carers must extend trust first; this may mean giving a young person a key to the house and expecting them to exercise responsibility. This will not always work, but a safety first approach through viewing all LAC as being untrustworthy destroys some young people's capacity to develop responsibility and trust and prevents them developing into the feeling, caring human being.

6.6.2: Social Workers

Social workers need to befriend black and dual heritage LAC and invest in the building that relationship. Ensuring adequate time in direct work and being flexible in this will reap benefits in terms of LAC's ability to form secondary attachments to social workers where at present they are wary of investing any emotions into this relationship. Social workers also need to inform the young people they work with about when they are on leave and to have a long term 'endings' plan that ideally includes a hand-over to a new worker. LAC testimonies reveal that they expect to be 'abandoned' by professionals. Knowing this, social workers should work from the first meeting on preparing the young person for an ending that should not happen

unless the worker is leaving the employ of that authority. Ideally, I would like to see this aspect receive legislative support but realise the complexity of the matter. A further recommendation is that social workers respect foster children by affording them courtesies such as arriving on time for appointments and doing what they say they will do. In short, social workers should demonstrate professional and personal reliability. They also need to ensure that black and dual heritage looked after young people can see evidence of their views not only being sought out and heard, but also acted upon, or at least be given an explanation as to why a request cannot be acted upon. Social workers should ensure LAC are involved in key decisions about their care especially about carers and education.

Social workers need to value the continuity of ongoing contact between LAC and their wider family, as this also helps with identity work. Social workers should mediate between foster parents and birth parents to value and prioritise continuation of contact. Engaging in meaningful identity work directly with every black and dual heritage young person should be the role of every social worker and employers need to ensure that this important aspect of social work is carried out.

A key recommendation is for social work post qualifying training to recognise working with black and dual heritage LAC as being a specialism and to create accredited and non-accredited courses that allow workers to develop an expertise in working with this vulnerable group. Specialist training should include research studies that make a case for specialism and a range of therapeutic theoretical and psychological theories and methods that can be applied in practice. In this, black workers would be encouraged to use their political knowledge and experience of being black to engage with and help black children in care navigate their way through the system. Social workers from other backgrounds should also be educated to view this group as having distinct needs that need addressing. Hence, the aim is for a repositioning of black and dual heritage looked after young people from being part of a homogenous whole towards a conscious political acceptance of black LAC as having special needs. This needs to be accepted by all professionals in the corporate parenting role.

6.6.3: Schools and Teachers

A fundamental recommendation for schools is for systems to be put in place, which identify the needs of black and dual heritage looked after children in education at every key stage from primary school until year 11 and beyond. The study confirmed that problems escalate on entry to secondary school and worsen every year thereafter. Therefore this group need targeted and sustained support early on backed up by carer and social worker encouragement before behavioural issues develop and the young people accept the roles and labels ascribed to them by teachers and peers. This support needs to be provided discretely and sensitively with carers, teachers and social workers working intensely and collaboratively in providing solid support to the young people for their education.

Teachers need to raise their awareness levels of LAC and be more sensitive to their emotional needs and ensure they maintain confidentiality. They need to recognise that these young people may not be ready to learn due to their circumstances but they appreciate encouragement given sensitively by key people. Above all, teachers should be conscious of applying stereotypes, assumptions and generalisations about black children in care and expect high achievement from *all* pupils. I am aware that this an ambitious recommendation since race bias in education has been attributed to teachers in the UK since records began in relation to black pupils (Coard, 1971) additionally, where pre-judgements regarding looked after children proliferate (Barnados, 2006; Harker et al, 2003) and when applied to black looked after young people, this makes the task of overcoming these, often unconscious, thought processes even harder to achieve. However, if the State is serious in its aim to have all children achieve their potential, it cannot afford to leave any group behind. Equally there is an obligation on researchers to continue to raise these issues even though they are longstanding and seemingly intractable.

6.6.4: Local Authorities

The corporate parenting role of local authorities needs to be strengthened for black and dual heritage LAC in acknowledgement that they present different and separate needs from other LAC. In line with this, local authorities need to recruit sufficient black and dual heritage carers using methods, which have been successful in other local authority areas. Once recruited, local authorities must provide foster carer training on psychologically derived topics to understand better the needs of black and dual heritage LAC. This training can be provided at different stages (new starters through to more experienced) and most of this could be joint training involving carers, teachers and social workers to strengthen the corporate partnership role, increase knowledge and awareness and facilitate positive relationships and reciprocal empathic understanding of all professional roles.

An important recommendation for local authorities is to ensure that best practice guidance and policies on same race placements are clear and accessible for every social worker. A further recommendation is to take the decision that this policy supports same race placements and, if possible, by ethnicity also. Black workers in this study also complained that attention to ethnicity and race is not well served by the Looked After Children's Assessment and Progress Records. Essentially they saw it as a mechanistic tool the use of which rendered LAC views invisible in an attempt to systematise assessment. These materials are centrally provided but feedback is needed from local authorities on their utility. While the use of these materials may point to further training for social workers in using the framework, more holistically it merits a recommendation for a review of these tools.

Furthermore, local authorities should review social worker caseloads to facilitate workers engaging in quality direct work with LAC. If possible they should develop a metric that can be applied as a rough guide for LAC on a social worker's case load. This is closely aligned to a need also for local authorities to create systems whereby social workers assigned a LAC case stays with that case until, and unless, they leave the employ of the borough. This is such an important recommendation that it warrants legislative underpinning.

Finally, it is recommended that local authorities create feedback loops for LAC who choose not to participate in Children in Care Councils and other such forums and who may not want to confide in their social worker. I am aware that LAC are assigned an independent visitor who they can talk to but this person was not mentioned at all in this study as someone the young person felt they would confide in: one challenge to the local authority is in finding effective ways to get the authentic views and voices of this discrete but significant group. This may be an area that warrants research, which leads me onto the next section.

6.6.5: Implications for Future Research

The first recommendation is that the current study be replicated and extended in different boroughs using mixed methods to explore deeply the needs of this neglected group. For example, it may be interesting to investigate what skills and knowledge foster carers think they need to possess in order to successfully meet the emotional requirements of black and dual heritage LAC. This information could usefully inform aspects of local authority training.

The evidence base of the needs of this group needs strengthening. It would be expanded by implementation of the recommendation above but in addition more studies are required to develop evidence based practice models for social workers and teachers. A longitudinal perspective would be interesting in that research could follow black and dual heritage children from their entry into care and throughout their entire stay in care. This may provide a better understanding of what factors influence identity development and begin to build a research base of 'what works' in relation to black and dual heritage young people in care. It would be essential that research methodologies help to uncover additional knowledge of the lived experiences of black and dual heritage LAC from their own perspective, as this is relatively unknown. In this, there is a need for research that builds on this research but redirects the focus onto black and dual heritage former care leavers who have done well in life. Using the

main themes identified in this study as a starting point the knowledge gained would be of relevance to practitioners, carers and policy makers.

Research could also usefully explore how social workers and foster carers can connect to the black community to facilitate effective practice aimed at maintaining contact with biological families to promote identity development.

In addition, there is a need to know how well and to what extent social workers and foster carers use psychological theory in practice. And to what extent are their decisions influenced by theory? Adherence to particular approaches that promote culturally competent psychological wellbeing and its conscious use should be promoted. Future studies might usefully address the question of whether natural parents instinctively put their children first in a way that 'carers' paid by a 'corporate' parent cannot? And to what extent is this influenced through trans-cultural placement? This can be aligned to further knowledge recommended as to the effectiveness of current foster carer recruitment processes answering the question whether they are rigorous enough to ensure quality. Here, it would be useful to know whether the social worker report is sufficient – in informing the fostering panel - to select families with the right mix of abilities and resilience to look after some of the most vulnerable young people in society. Families also need to understand the behaviours of black LAC and the different forms these can take according to the culture of child. Investigating foster carer recruitment requirements and whether they are fit for purpose is echoed elsewhere as an 'extremely pertinent area requiring further research (Morgan and Barron, 2011).

Finally, researchers have to desist from treating LAC as a homogenous group. Groups within that population vary as to their needs and while these needs may not differ greatly materially, emotionally this study has found that they differ significantly. Black and dual heritage looked after young people require a qualitatively different form of care from other groups within this population and to ignore this dimension of their needs is tantamount to admitting that these needs do not matter. This study identifies these needs as arising from LAC ethnicity, schooling, and identity, which interacts with societal racism and prejudice to adversely affect their experiences in care.

6.6.6: Implications for Policy

Arising from the above are a number of important implications for policy. The findings in general contribute to an evidence base that local authorities can use to ensure they provide culturally appropriate services that meet the needs of black and dual heritage LAC. These findings may also have transferability for other disciplines in addition to social work, namely psychology, psychiatry, mental health, public health and education.

This study has identified significant deficits in meeting the needs of looked after black young people. Many of these deficits could be directly linked to failings in social policy. For example, in the area of same race placements, policy and guidance moved away from support for racial matching, to an emphasis on prioritising the welfare of the child (see Children Act Guidance, Vol. 3 2015; and Care Matters White paper, 2007). Current policy on race matching finds expression through the Children and Family Act (DfE, 2014) which repealed the requirement contained in the Adoption and Children Act (2002) for adoption agencies to give due consideration to a child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background when making decisions regarding adoption. Implications from this study suggests that any retreat from the principle of recognising the particular needs of specific groups, to a general 'meeting the welfare' of the child aim, risks marginalising these outlier groups and their needs. An implication here, is for policy makers to focus instead on legislation that supports local authorities in recruiting, and retaining, sufficient numbers of appropriate foster carers in order to have a larger pool of carers from which to appropriately match young people with.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) needs enforcing by Government. In overlooking the needs of black and dual heritage LAC and their educational experiences, this suggests that local authorities are in dereliction of their duty in the implementation of the Act. Local authorities need to assess how their policies and processes affect minority groups, and take remedial action where differential

outcomes are found. The implication arising from this, is for Government to strengthen and enforce its own legislation in this regard.

Another area where existing policies needs strengthening and enforcing, is in ensuring LAC voices are heard. Where LAC express resistance to a particular placement, this opinion should be given serious consideration. Similarly, more widely, LAC should also be routinely involved in placement choices where possible, as this will enhance the chances of placement success. This principle of listening to young people is underpinned by legislation, but research shows it is not happening (Ofsted, 2010). LAC voices need to be heard as they invariably know what they need in order to enhance their emotional wellbeing. The small research base in this area will take time to grow, but Government and local authorities, in ensuring they listen, and act on the voices from all LAC groups, will, in the meantime, move a step closer to realising their long-term aims for LAC.

In addition, where Government commission research on the needs of LAC, especially large scale research that covers the population of England, there is a need to ensure the methodology adopted, support reporting the findings for different ethnic groups rather than the looked after population as a whole. Valuable data on how different groups experience the system is missed through this omission.

It is hoped that this study has shown that the challenges faced by black young people are not as a result of pathology or lifestyle choice, but rather see their silenced position as attributable to those structural forces which create anti-black values in society. It has been explained that social workers and carers should seek to establish more culturally responsive services for black children, families and communities. By heeding the findings of this study, social workers and carers would be in a better position to use social policy more effectively to empower black children and dual heritage looked after children in leading the kind of lives that all children are entitled to by right.

Training and ongoing support for social workers, foster carers and teachers should be reviewed for the extent that they include theoretical, therapeutic and practical input in

meeting the needs of black and dual heritage looked after young people. The training for social workers and teachers are largely prescribed and the curriculum for both is intense. However, the proposed training could form part of Continuing Professional Development for both groups and might usefully be provided through the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) that every local authority must establish. Foster Carers could then access this training as part of their ongoing training. Currently, there is an absence of models for selecting, training and supporting foster carers so that their quality of care to black and dual heritage young people is improved. I hesitate to make this recommendation for policy change in the light of research by Sinclair et al (2004) and NICE/SCIE (2010) that failed to find evidence that training for foster carers has any benefit in raising their success with young people. However, Sinclair et al (2004) found that such training might have an effect on foster carers satisfaction and retention.

6.7: Theoretical Relevance

This study has used empirical findings to show that the theoretical case for universalism needs to be revisited in order to further understand the unique position of black and dual heritage LAC and how their wellbeing can be safeguarded. The analysed data hold theoretical relevance beyond the research questions. The data raises questions about the way society regards separate groups within it and the extent to which membership of those groups dictate experiences. It also raises questions for policy makers as to the extent they are willing to legislate to support minority groups based on evidence when it is easier for them to focus on the majority and claim policies are in the interests of all. It also holds messages for the research community not to assume colour-blind designs in their methodologies in social science, as minority groups are not well served by such approaches.

This section gives a brief overview of the findings of the study and their relationship to previous work in these areas. In terms of the first research question, which looked at the experience of being looked after and its impact on the emotional wellbeing of black and dual heritage looked after young people, the findings of this study are very

similar to that of Bazalgette et al (2015) who asked the question 'how can we achieve good emotional wellbeing for all children in care? And what would a care system that prioritises children's emotional wellbeing look like? As a result of fieldwork with young people, four local authorities and a number of professional groups the study identified five priorities for change: embed an emphasis on emotional wellbeing throughout the LAC system; take a proactive approach; support children's relationships and support care leavers emotional needs (p5). All of these findings are salient to the current study save the emphasis on care leavers. This degree of consistency between the studies is interesting given that one is on LAC in general and the other focuses on black and dual heritage looked after young people. This suggests what has hitherto been highlighted that there are a number of similarities in needs of LAC groups but clear differences emerge when research methodologies enables their identification. This study also builds on the work in particular of First Key (1987), Ince (1998), and to a lesser extent Robinson (2000), and Barn et al (1997, and 2005). Both Ince and Robinson focused on identity, Robinson used a quantitative methodology (that excluded mixed race LAC) and reported different findings whereas Ince, using similar methodology to my study, reported similar findings to mine but focused on black children in shire counties, mostly in residential care and looked after by white carers and serviced by white professionals. Cameron and Maginn's (2011) work is also consistent with the themes of this study in that the emotional context of being looked after is stressed through encouraging secure attachments, improving emotional competence and building warm relationships. The cultural aspect of building warm relationships is emphasised by Rohner (2004). It is for this reason that this study supports PAR theory (Rohner, 2004) as worthy of consideration to be adopted as a potential way forward to meeting the needs of this vulnerable group which will be all the more effective in combination with 'authoritative parenting' (Buamrind (1993). Cameron and Maginn (2011) make the point that educational attainment, behaviour and emotional wellbeing are inextricably linked and this finds echoes with the responses from respondents in this study.

Gaining the views of LAC directly is consistent with a number of studies seeking to give voice to LAC. Selwyn and Riley (2015) for example reviewed almost one hundred such studies. A key theme to emerge from all of those studies was the LAC wish to maintain and develop positive relationships with adults and for these

relationships to be 'loving'. This mirrors the findings of this study and underlines the point that, in a number of ways, young people from whatever background have similar needs – one of which is to be loved. This found expression in this study in a number of themes and subthemes. Another key similarity between Selwyn and Riley (Ibid) and this study is the finding that carers and social workers paid little attention to helping LAC maintain longstanding relationships, which led to feelings of abandonment and a lack of attachment figures in their lives.

The findings of Chapter 4, in the investigation of the second research question, looked at the practice frameworks and professional interventions that might best promote the emotional wellbeing of this group. The notion that universal services serve institutionally racist practices by assuming equality of service for everyone will ensure equality for all was highlighted long ago by Smaje (1995) amongst others. A number of studies (Allain, 2007, Howe, 1992, Blueprint Project, 2004) reported the importance of direct work with foster carers and LAC and the time needed to do this work effectively seems to be borne out by the responses of the social workers who cited lack of time as a significant frustration in their ambition to improve the quality of provision for this vulnerable subgroup. Likewise, the theoretical confirmation of the importance of the relationship between social workers and LAC seems to be confirmed in the data. Munro's (2001) finding on the importance of the social worker to her sample seems to ring true in the analysis of respondents narratives in this study even though most felt let down by the quality of service they received, they nonetheless recognised and appreciated quality service when they received it. The topic of matching was broadly similar to findings of other studies (Barn et al 2005, Duncalf, 2010, Thorburn et al 2000) but dissimilar to some (DfES, 2007).

6.8: The Distinctive Contribution of the Current Research

It is hoped that the current study has extended and developed theory and findings from existing literature, as well as adding new insight into the phenomenon under focus. This study set out to gain an understanding of how black and dual heritage LAC experience being in care and how this impacts on their emotional development. The findings build on and extend the small amount of existing research on black and dual heritage looked after children. Many studies have included the voice of looked after young people but very few focused on black and dual heritage looked after young people. In so doing, this study adds to the knowledge of this under researched group.

Current ideas on working with this group multi-professionally is indicated as it includes messages for schools and carers as to how they might better meet the needs of black and dual heritage looked after people. Focusing on listening to the voices of this vulnerable group on this subject is novel in the literature and, when considered alongside the literature, highlighted gaps in practice. Results suggest that in most cases emotional problems in children give a signal to work with the carer to enhance their skills at responding rather than with trying to change the young person.

The continued marginalisation of black and dual heritage looked after young people was examined through the literature review in Chapter 2. However, although the chapter reviews a range of relevant studies it is also the case that few of these have reported from the black LAC point of view. This study aimed to contribute to this gap in the literature by adding a new dimension to the study of their experiences as LAC and highlighting their exclusion from the research agenda. The study has also sought to contribute to existing research by providing black and dual heritage LAC and black and dual heritage social workers an opportunity to discuss how they perceive the system and services delivered to them in the context of societal and institutional racism. This has provided insights into some of the issues and problems some professionals face in practice in delivering quality services within a system that may not be structured or flexible enough to meet the needs of significant subgroups within

it. It is thus left to committed individuals to act unilaterally without institutional backing in providing culturally informed services.

6.9: Concluding Remarks

This final chapter has linked the findings of the research to the research questions, and also to the wider literature around the experiences of black and dual heritage looked after young people. The default position in the literature is to view LAC as being the same where 'good practice' is taken to include the different groups of young people in care. This study challenges that view and provides evidence through the testimonies of black and dual heritage young people that they have distinctive needs in emotion, in education and identity formation that have to be taken into account if they are to develop successfully across personal, social and emotional domains.

This investigation has highlighted an ongoing role for carers and social workers in the support of black and dual heritage young people in care, and has confirmed findings from previous research in the area of the importance of relationships; the role of carers emotional and academic support; the need for consistent reliable social worker support in all areas and the need for improved systems and policies to support social workers to deliver quality services.

This study aimed to capture, and interpret, the perceptions and experiences of black and dual heritage LAC using a qualitative IPA research approach. Although generalisations should be viewed with caution for studies adopting an IPA stance, I would suggest that the themes from this analysis can contribute to, and at times challenge, our professional understanding of black and dual heritage looked after young people and of their experiences of being in care.

The data suggests that the way professionals work with this vulnerable group needs to be strengthened. Policy should reflect the need for continuity of care and support workers in remaining with young people throughout their care career.

Additional training is indicated for social workers on identity over and above training on life story work. This training might include therapeutic strategies and approaches to build into their repertoire of skills when interacting with looked after children. Knowledge on theoretical interventions based on psychological knowledge is indicated to raise the quality of intervention of workers. Social workers can also help to train carers to spot the signs and symptoms of emotional and psychological trauma and to challenge racism and prejudice. Such training can form part of workers CPD and be useful to them in their returns to social work professional body HCPC. Employers need to review caseloads of workers to facilitate the building of long lasting quality relationships with young people. Employers need to review their practice and focus on combating high staff turnover as this acts against stability of workers for young people. Anti-oppressive practice that promotes cultural diversity is indicated and needs to permeate every training and research project as a philosophical foundation. Workers and carers should be jointly trained with ethics and values, with critical reflection on own value base, - forming part of every topic. Alongside this should run training for all social workers to meet the needs of this group and to spot signs and symptoms of depression and more serious mental health problems.

Ultimately, the needs of this group are likely to continue to be overlooked if researchers, carers and policymakers continue to treat looked after children as a homogenous whole. Respondents in this study have spoken clearly that they have needs which are similar to other looked after young people but which differ significantly due to their ethnic heritage, and this needs to be accounted for at every stage of their care career. Where policies exist that purportedly support that message the evidence is that policies are not translated into good practice. Young people are not consulted, identity work does not happen, contact with birth family is not taken seriously, and carers, save for a notable few, do not address identity issues. Continuance of these practices is unlikely to enhance LAC emotional wellbeing.

Finally, the research has highlighted the potential of black and dual heritage looked after young people to speak for themselves and to air their views on their experiences so that these can be taken into consideration by those charged with caring for them. The depth and intensity of the narratives testify to the positioning of the user voice as

'expert' in relation to their own needs. What they have to say should inform future research into their experience of being looked after and the ways in which corporate parenting is organised to look after them should be informed at its core by these voices. This will necessitate corporate parenting at its best with meaningful collaboration between researchers, carers, social workers and teachers in order to develop more effective provision for black LAC and thus allow them to achieve their full potential in adult life.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

The Emotional Well-Being of Black and Dual Heritage Looked-After Young
People

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project. You should only
participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any
way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to
understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve.
Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others
if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more
information.

Why are we doing this research project?

Not enough is known about how being looked-after affects the emotional well-being
of black and dual-heritage young people. While previous research has focused on the
emotional health of all looked-after young people very little of this has focused on the
needs of black and dual heritage young people as a group. Even fewer research
studies have considered this issue from the point of view of the young people
themselves and considered how their view may help shape the support they need. It is
our hope that the provision of evidence to policy makers, local authorities, foster

carers and social workers on how you experience being looked-after will be used positively to improve the service that you, and others that come after you, will receive. The aim of this project is to understand from your point of view, how being looked-after affects your emotional well-being. I aim to better understand this from the perspectives of the key groups of people involved – you as a looked-after young person and social workers.

The benefit to you, individually, in taking part in the project is the knowledge that your participation will contribute to promoting the emotional well-being of black and dual heritage looked-after young people and thus improve the quality of service you and others receive in the future. You will also receive a small acknowledgement for you time (£20.00 in vouchers).

Why have we approached you?

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project as a black or dual-heritage looked-after young person, or as a social work practitioner; We aim to contact black and dual heritage looked after young people in one or more local authorities in London. If you are a young person looked-after in one of these boroughs, the researcher working on this project will only receive your contact details from the local authority responsible for you once you have consented to taking part (an exception to this is if you would like further information before deciding).

What would your participation involve?

If you are interested in taking part, you will be contacted and you can then ask any questions that you may have about it. I will arrange a mutually convenient time for your interview. The interview will take about 60 minutes and your permission the interviewer will record the interview.

The following are examples of questions that may be included in the interview:

Looked-After Young People:
"What are the things about being looked-after that makes you feel happy?"

"What are the things about being looked-after that creates difficulties?"

"What are the things about being looked-after that you would like to improve?"

"Do you think your racial background has affected in any way (positively or negatively) the way you have been treated?"

If during the interview there are any questions you would prefer not to answer, that is absolutely fine. Similarly, if you would like a break at any time during the interview, or would like to stop the interview, please feel free to say so.

The interviewer, Sinclair Coward, is a trained researcher and a former youth worker, social worker and secondary school teacher and has worked for a number of years with looked-after young people in residential children's homes as a care worker.

What would happen next?   And would it be confidential?

I will transcribe your interview, making sure that any details, which could identify you, such as names of people or places, were removed. I will read the transcripts from the different interviews and draw up a report from what people have said. Your interview transcript would be in an electronic computer file, which will be password-protected. A paper copy would be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the university.

In the report, I will include quotations from different transcripts to illustrate different points. These quotations will be anonymised – that is they will not use any information that can identify you. On the consent form you would be asked to give your permission for anonymised quotations from your transcript to be included in the final report.

Interested?

If you are interested in taking part please contact Sinclair Coward. His details are as follows:

E-mail: sinclair.coward@londonmet.ac.uk

Tel: 020 71335028

If I am there, please leave a message with your contact details and I will get back to you as soon as I can.

I would like to emphasise that it is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

Any problems / complaints?

If, as a result of participating in this research you feel there has been any detrimental effect on you, please contact London Metropolitan University using the details below for further advice and information: Professor Norman Ginsburg. E-mail: n.ginsburg@londonmet.ac.uk
Tel: 020 7133 5203

Appendix 2: Consent Form

WRITTEN CONSENT

Please give written consent to participation in this study after you have read the Information Sheet and / or listened to an explanation about the research by agreeing to the following points.

Title of Study: The Emotional Well-Being of Black and Dual Heritage Looked-After Young People

London Metropolitan University Research Ethics Committee Ref:

• Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part.

• If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

• I consent to the interview being recorded and anonymised quotations from the transcript being included in the final report.

• I understand that if I decide at any other time before or during the interview that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researcher involved

and be withdrawn from it immediately. I can withdraw my data from the project at any time up until it is transcribed for use in the final report.

•   I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Thank you very much!

Appendix 3: Topic Guides

Each Category generates a number of questions that act as a guide for interviews
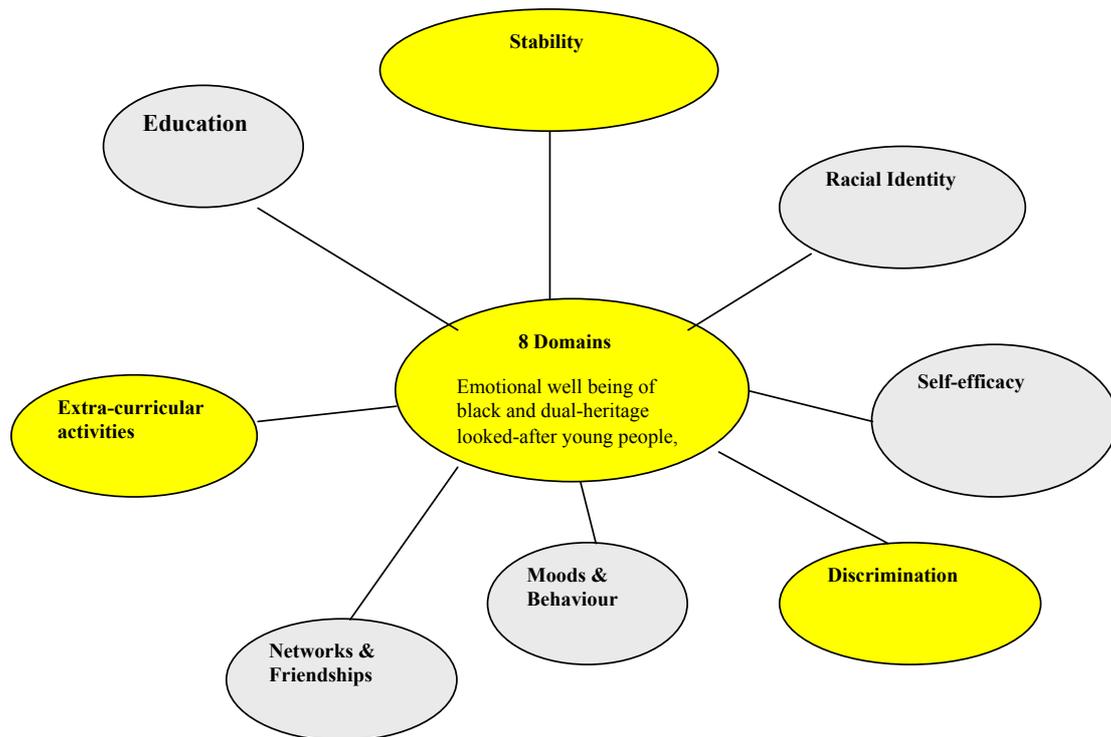
Topic Guides 1) LAC   2) Social Workers (Indicative Questions)

1

Stability

How many times have you moved placement in the last year?

Self efficacy/esteem

Do you feel in control of your own life?
Are you happy with who you are?
What are you good at? Would anyone else agree with this?
What two things would improve the quality of your life?
What advice would you give to a black child about to enter care?
What's good about being in care?

Racial/ identity

Do you think you have needs different from other LAC?
How would you describe yourself?
Have you ever discussed racial issues with anyone?
Are you religious at all?
What's good about being black and in care?
What's bad about being black and in care?
Do you have friends from your own racial group? Is this important to you?
Is knowing about your own racial group/ethnicity important to you?

Unfair treatment

Do you feel that you been unfairly treated because of your colour? Because you are a LAC?
How do you respond if you feel you are being judged unfairly?

Networks/friendships

Who do you talk to when feeling down?
Are most of your friends looked after or not looked after? Do you have white friends?

Education

Do you enjoy school?
Are you are a regular school attender?
Have you ever been suspended or excluded from school?
Have you changed school in the past year?

Extra curricular activities

What, if any, clubs, groups' sports teams are you involved in?
What do you do for fun?

Mood/Behaviour

When you are upset how would anyone else know?
What makes you angry?
When are you most happy?

The above categories/questions are a guide for the interviewer and will not be asked in a linear fashion but rather used to stimulate discussion. Questions necessarily overlap and the categorisations are not rigid. The intention is to create an informal

discussion rather than interview. The responses from the LAC and young people will be analysed and will inform questions put to the social workers.

2

Your current occupation? Years experience? Name? What does you job entail?

It seems that the young people I spoke with are well cared for materially but almost all mentioned the lack of genuine emotional input from carers. Is this a problem for you? In your opinion, how should the care system address this?

Do you think that BDHLAC have different emotional needs to other BDHLAC? Please explain?

How would you describe your ethnicity?

How far do you think your organisation supports your work in working with BDHLAC?

How far do the assessment frameworks you use (LAC materials, Assessment framework) help you in working with BDHLAC?

How have you brought any of your previous life and professional knowledge to bear on your current role?

What policy changes do you feel need to be made, if any, in order to meet the emotional needs of all LAC, in particular BDHLAC?

Young people who I spoke with said they perceived differences in the way they were cared for between themselves and the carers own children. Have you perceived such differences? If so, how did you respond? If not why do you think young people reported this?

Is it important for a BDHLAC to develop a positive black identity? If not why not? If so how can the 'system' facilitate this? And what have you personally done to facilitate this in the past?

Should DH LAC be encouraged to adopt a black identity?

What are your views on transracial placement?

School emerges as a trial for BDHLAC. Assuming these children are not any less intelligent than other children, why do you think school is so difficult for them? Is this the case in your experience? What do you think needs to happen to address this?

Do you agree with matching foster carers ethnically with young people? What about matching social workers ethnically with young people?

Looking back on your professional experience what advice would you give to a young black or dual heritage about to enter care for the first time? Ditto for foster carers who are a different ethnicity from their fostered child?

BDHLAC called many FC 'nine to fivers' meaning they are only doing it for the money. What do you think about that?

Appendix 4: Thematic Map

Thematic Map: Major and subordinate themes
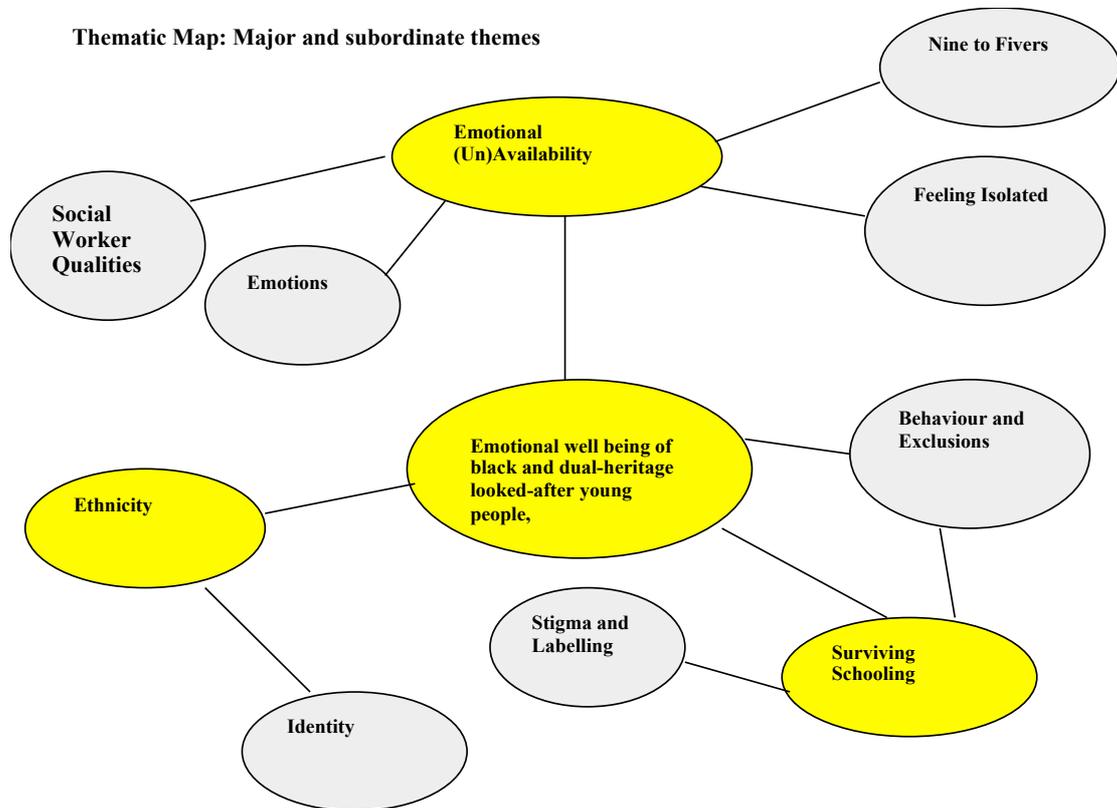
Appendix 5 Interview Narrative Coding Process Example from R1

Interview (R1)
Female. Aged 18. Dual Heritage

Social services came into life when I was 11. When my dad died and I was living with my mum. This broke down and I went to live with my sister in Peckham. My sister them had a stroke and was put into care aged 13/14 and stayed in care after that in lots foster placements.

Never went into residential. Had a good amount of them so many I cant remember a rough guess it would be about 10. Reason I moved as I was never placed suitable until my last – others had certain rules I didn't agree with. I forced a few moves and some FC said they didn't want me back. Some of them didn't understand me saw me as being rude and not listening. They didn't understand that moving from your home to living with a stranger is a big thing and is repetitive thing. The feeling never changes once you know you have to pack up and move again its always the same.

Social services teach FC that fostering is 9-5 a lot of them stick to this and don't realise kids in care need more than like being in care. Some FC don't treat you as an individual but treat you as another kid. The only FC who ignored everything SS said to her was my last FC because she never saw it as a 9-5 and treated me like I was one of her own kids. I was never with any FC for more than 1 year but was with her for 3 years.

A lot of it is to do with ethnic background. My mum's Jamaican and dad is white. A lot of the time I was put with African FC (6:40). Food and home smells is different and I always felt like I was being pout with people with different backgrounds to me and they wonder why my placements never work. . I have nothing against Africans. SS asked Victoria where do you want to live? And I said match me up properly and then it could work. I always felt they said this is the next available placement and so off you go. I could understand if it was an (7:59) emergency placement but my first placement was an emergency but they placed me and just left me there. My first FC – she didn't actually talk to us (there was me and another girl) I think she was mixed race but I didn't find out where she came from. I don't know how you can look after a child and not talk to them. I think a lot of FC slip through the net and SSD don't see what goes on and how isolated they make you feel. Once in care you feel isolated from friends and stuff as they go home and I go into this persons home. *I lied for a long time that I was in care. Not a lot of people understand what's in like being in care they are very naïve they feel you fucked up. It's hard you end up shutting off to everything – almost like you don't have emotions.*

MY last FC was not like that and if she bought her kids something she would make sure she bought us something as well. It makes a difference when in care most rooms are magnolia and bed and that's it but she had us choose out furniture and colour.

I would describe myself as both parts of cultures. Black side more dominant because my dad the only person I met from his side. His relatives not interested in meeting.

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [1]: Multiple placements

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [2]: No residential stay

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [3]: Behavioural issues

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [4]: FC not understanding

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [5]: Social services gives FC wrong advice

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [6]: Treated like one of FC own kids

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [7]: Thinks ethnicity ha an impact on care experience

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [8]: Not matched for ethnicity placement contributed to placement breakdown

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [9]: Doesn't agree with TRP

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [10]: Poor quality FC

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [11]: Isolated in care from friends and family. You are on your own and considers she was living on her won since she was 13

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [12]: Lied about being in care due to stigma and assumption of 'bad'

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [13]: Shut off emotions to cope

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [14]: POsitive experience with FC who demonstrated LAC equal qith own kids

me. Now just me and my brother which is my black side. I have a good balance. More towards the white side when in care had only had white friends. My Fc who is Jamaican made me realise both sides are important by doing her family tree and she made all three of us get involved with this. She paid for us to search our family tree – it was good for me so I could see both sides. It made me more interested in how my mum grew up in Jamaica.

People say to me you look more white and ask is your mum white? My granddad is a knight. My dad has a family coat of arms but I'm not interested as they never wanted to know me.

Social Workers

I've never had a white social worker. Had a white IRO but not a SW. My first SW went to Barbados and brought me back stuff. As you get older in care the SW's aren't bothered. You don't want to see them and they don't want to see you. They used to ask me questions about identity but I used to say I'm just a kid in care and no identity issues. The only kids in care I interacted with were kids at my foster placement. I didn't want to interact with other kids in care. I don't think care experiences are not that different you either get an ok placement, a good one or shit one, and whatever you get you have to deal with it. FC don't treat you according to your ethnicity all they see is a piece of paper. You come with a bag, a social worker, and a file. You're treated as a file. So if they read you're a runaway and not easy to deal with they treat you like that. My one was 'I like to run away'. So it said, 'if she is not back by this time call the police'. It was true, but shouldn't be the first thing new FC knows about you. This is wrong as the FC then doesn't say to themself 'well maybe I might speak to her and I might be the one to change her behaviour'.

School

Was horrible. It was the worst thing of being in care. Every teacher knew you were in care and they would single you out for it. When my FC came in they would say over the tannoy 'Victoria you FC is here', and kids would say 'I didn't know you were in care?'. I hate being singled out, and when kids said 'I didn't know you were in care I thought you lived at home', I used to act out and hit people. So that every one knew if they asked that question what would happen, so I was always in trouble. Your stereotyped, 'cause kids in care are never seen to do well. I was never xxx I was a statistic. Teachers and schools need to be taught abut kids in care, they need to be trained that being in care is a very touchy subject. It nearly changed my temperament. Once you come in care you feel you are on your own. I see it as I lived on my own since I was 13. You are your own family. Most FC, if something happens at school they will not defend you – unlike parents who will defend in front of teachers even though you may be trouble when you get home.

One FC defended me and I felt 'well I do have a type of family because she defended me and that's what families do'. I had friends in school but not many knew my situation. With a lot of FC it's like 'no friends, straight home after school'. If you go to someone's home you want to return it, but FC ban this they feel they have enough

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [15]: Mixed race but black dominant because only knew dad

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [16]: However in care had only white freinds

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [17]: FC did identity work eg family tree so could see both sides of family. Seen as positive

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [18]: Rejected by white side of family

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [19]: Had only black SWs

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [20]: Asked about identity but never followed it through

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [21]: Carers colour-blind. Treated as a file.

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [22]: Poor educational experiences 'worst thing about being in care'. Teachers single you out as they know you are in care

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [23]: Teachers lack of sensitivity could have resulted in bullying and resulted in 'acting out' hitting people in order to avoid people asking questions about parenst

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [24]: Stereotyped in school as they never do well. Just a statistic.

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [25]: Teachers and schools need to be trained that being in care at school is a touchy subject for the kid involved. 'it nearly changed my temprament'.

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [26]: One FC who defended her in school she felt that she now has a family

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to deal with with the foster kids. They are not paid to have your friend there, they do the bare minimum cause they are paid.

I think 95% are in it because they get paid very well. It's an easy way to get money so you don't have to go out to work. 5% do it cause they want to change a kid's life. I can always tell what a FC is like the minute I step in their aura. They change the minute the SW leaves. I have only ever had one good FC, she bought me bedding and fridge and a cooker even though she wasn't paid to do it any more. You can feel it when somebody actually genuinely cares – she still calls me to this day. For example, when my SW told her 'she likes to run away', she said, 'well you say she likes to run away but I don't know'. Most FC say ok what time should I call the police. I tested her and she left a message on my 'phone saying she isn't going to call the police and I haven't got time to be running away from the police, so when you're ready to come home you know where I am. After that I said to friends, 'I'm going home as she is not going to give up'. I was acting out in school and getting excluded and she always stood by me even when I admitted the behaviour, for her it didn't matter, as she wanted me to get my GCSEs. At one point she came into school and sat there; which FC will do that? She held my corner and treated me like she treated the rest of her kids.

It's like SS give FC a script to read when you come in of house rules etc etc. When the SW goes, the FC act like they don't know who you are. The last one was herself right from the beginning.

If I got down in care I would tell no one, FC don't have time to talk to you they are not interested. I'm originally from xxx and so I was taken to xxx it was like a foreign place. It's a lot harder to do things in care because you need authorisation if you need something, most FC won't buy it but they ask SS and by the time that happens you're no longer interested. Most of the time I was out with friends just being outside.

Social Workers

3 pieces of advice:

1 contact them more. – SW wait for the kid to contact them but they should call to see if they are ok it would help with the isolation (43:18)
2 support the kids more. Back them up a bit more with things like school
3 just remember every kid in care is not the same – we are similar but very different.

FC

1 to forget everything SS tells them
2 treat kids in care how you treat own child not just materially but emotionally. Remind them that you are family even if it is just for a week
3 give kids in care credit where it's due. Celebrate positives don't just react to bad news as if you expect it. For kids in care it is more important to hear this. My last FC I wasn't allowed to go up to my room until I told her how my day was. Not just it was fine but in detail. Sometimes this got on my nerves, but sometimes I was happy that someone wanted to hear how my day went.
4 looking after kids is 24 hours and should be from the heart not from a piece a paper.

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [27]: Paying FC promote role as a job. 95% do it to avoid going out to work

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [28]: Good FC question SW assessment of child which is often labelling

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [29]: Example of FC behaviour demonstrating really care

sinclair 6/10/15 14:21
Comment [30]: Lack of someone to confide in when down. FC say no time.

They say FC are not meant to be emotionally attached to the child. Bullshit. You can't have a child and not be attached to them. That's why many kids in care are so fucked up they lose touch with their emotions. You don't feel things you don't feel things you don't feel happy you don't cry. For me its proper weird. I haven't cried for 10 years. When I see people crying over a death I say why are you crying and I say to myself I'm pretty fucked up [49:30]. A good friend of mine died recently I'd known him since a child and I couldn't cry. I was at the funeral just standing there and I couldn't feel anything.

I think sw need to teach FC what its like to be a child in care. They need to hear from kids in care and realise its not fun. My kid will have someone to play. A lot of kids come from bad places and situations – that's were SS are messing up kids in care saying they shouldn't be emotionally attached. If the reason for this is to protect children then they should know better what kind of people they have looking after children. No emotions is like a brick wall. They tell us we will be loved and cared for in a foster family so you go into a placement thinking they will care for you and once your in the home you can be in your room for three days and they don't check. Its like I'm meant to come to you with open arms but you stand there with folded arms. SS should do proper checks to make sure every one looking children is safe and don't abuse the kids and allow them to be emotionally available. I don't mean every child wants a hug but you do need someone to talk to at some point in time. For me things like having a boyfriend I had no one to talk to. Every child needs guidance every child needs a parent figure to talk to ad most kids in care don't have that

They would hold back their emotions with their own child. Most FC don't see the similarities between foster kid and own kid. Many FC stay with what they were taught and not what they learn through experience. Care is a bullshit word. I'm not saying FC should love foster kids because some of are shits we do horrible things but at least like us – caring isn't the right way to approach kids you can care about anything. Teachers care about you from 9-3 after that they don't care. Need to teach the FC to have emotions towards these kids

I call myself mixed-race.

I don't think my ethnicity was noticed when I as in care. They do things like black history month. Being mixed race is confusing. In care you are not treated with an ethnicity, because you have black in you are treated as Caribbean or black. I would have liked to have been with a mixed race FC to see what it was like. They always put me with black FC.

With adoption its not as if as being in care as once you're adopted they are your family. With FC its not your solid home and you may have to pack up and go. With FC even something like food they are very different like me if I don't know something I'm not to keen on trying. Matching in Foster placements is very important.

At school having African FC coming in in their tradition clothes for me it catches a lot of attention as I am not African and people think it's odd.