

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Aspiration Formation in Looked After Children

being a Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of

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by

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Overview

The portfolio has three parts:

Part one: A systematic literature review of evidence based and theoretically derived models of civic engagement development in adolescence.

Part two: A qualitative research study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore looked after children's ideas for the future and the factors that contribute to the formation of these aspirations.

Part three: Appendices consisting of documents relating to the systematic literature review and the qualitative research study. A reflective statement and an epistemological statement are also included.

Total word count: 33,898

Part One

Systematic Literature Review

**Evidence based and theoretically derived models of civic engagement development in
adolescence: A Systematic Review**

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This paper is written in the format ready for submission to the
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Please see Appendix A for the Guidelines for Authors.

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Evidence based and theoretically derived models of civic engagement development in adolescence: A Systematic Review

Abstract

The importance of youth civic engagement for individuals and society is increasingly being recognised. The development of civic engagement in adolescents has attracted much attention. This systematic review aimed to identify proposed models of the development of civic engagement during adolescence that are rooted in theoretical frameworks and from a range of disciplines. Ten articles were included and their developmental models examined. Results indicated that theoretically based models of civic engagement development highlight key influential factors, including media use, parental relationships and neighbourhood social connectedness. These are discussed with consideration of home, school and community based interventions to foster youth civic engagement. The review highlighted the need for a unified definition of civic engagement and multi-disciplinary collaboration in future research and practice.

Key words: *Civic engagement, Adolescence, Developmental models, Theoretical framework*

Introduction

In recent years, interest in the importance and development of youth civic engagement has increased across governmental and multi-disciplinary research arenas internationally. As a result of this, many studies have investigated key factors that contribute to defining the concept of civic engagement among young people as well as examining influences on its development and enactment. Much of this research draws upon theoretical concepts and models in order to inform the understanding of their findings and contribute to identifying future directions for research. This review will focus on the proposed models and pathways of the development of civic engagement during adolescence that are rooted in theoretical frameworks and from a range of disciplines. First the definition of the concept of civic engagement will be discussed before exploring the evidence for its role and importance for both the individual and society at large.

Defining Civic Engagement

The literature on civic engagement reveals that there is no clear single definition that is regarded as fully encapsulating all its elements (Amna, 2012). It has been suggested that “how the term is defined depends to a large degree on the perspective and interests of the definer” (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 237). “Engagement” appears to be used interchangeably with “participation”, “responsibility”, “competence” and “involvement” but is often used more specifically in reference to the enactment of an individual’s civic thoughts, beliefs and values. The manner in which a person is considered to be actively civically engaged is thought to take a number of forms at different levels of participation, “from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation”

(American Psychological Association, 2014). Adler and Goggin (2005) define civic engagement as a description of “how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future” (p. 241) and summarise the literature’s definitions as consisting of four key concepts of civic engagement: 1) Community Service; 2) Collective Action; 3) Political Involvement; and 4) Social Change. Amna (2012) suggests that “civic engagement deals with values, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, knowledge, skills and behaviours concerned with conditions outside the immediate environment of family and friends” (p.613). In essence, civic engagement appears to be driven by a variety of motivators, is present in a range of contexts and takes a number of different forms.

The importance of Civic Engagement

Despite the lack of consensus on its specific definition, it is evident that youth civic engagement is regarded as valuable and worthy of exploration. The potential benefit to society of the contributions that young people can make through their perspectives, ideas, time and energy has attracted much attention (Amna, 2012). At an international level, the United Nations has voiced a commitment to “young people’s effective inclusive civic engagement at local, national, regional and global level promoted” (United Nations, 2013). It has acted on its recognition of young people and all that they have to offer as crucial contributors to how the societies to which they belong continue to develop through a number of declarations and strategies over several decades; Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965); International Youth Year: Participation, Development and Peace (1985); World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY, 1995; United

Nations, 2010). WPAY (1995; United Nations, 2010) draws particular attention to the need for an increase in opportunities for “full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making” (United Nations, 2010, p42) and calls for commitment and relevant action from governments and youth organisations.

Influential Factors in Civic Engagement Development

Studies have indicated several key areas that contribute to the development or likelihood of youth civic engagement. While acknowledging the possibility of biological factors, such as genetic heritability, Amna (2012) organises the results from much of the research into four important developmentally influential groups: family, schools, peers, and associational life. These are supported by evidence of the impact of certain relationships in adolescence on civic engagement, including perceived parenting behaviour (Bebiroglu, Geldhof, Pinderhigges, Phelps & Lerner, 2013), peers and the school context (Jahromi, Crocetti, & Buchanan, 2012) and connections in family and community contexts (Duke, Skay, Pettingell & Borowsky, 2009). With the increasing presence of media and technology in the lives of adolescents, the exploration of these in relation to civic engagement was inevitable and has identified valuable understanding of their power and influence both positively and negatively. For example, civic engagement was found to be facilitated by the use of various forms of media (Pasek, Kenski, Romer & Jamieson, 2006) with suggestions that civic development can be enhanced through youths experimenting with a virtual city (Bers & Chau, 2006). Furthermore, within the context of schools, the predictive value of positive attitudes to different media and technology in relation to the intent to be civically active has also been demonstrated (Hobbs, Donnelly, Friesem & Moen, 2013). Findings from the latter study suggest that this correlation between adolescents’ intention to be

civically active and their positive attitudes towards media, particularly the news, could be contributed to by in-school experience of media pre-production activities. It further proposes that these subsequently facilitate the expression of adolescents' knowledge and understanding of media news decision making, political bias, difference of opinions and the value of information (Hobbs, Donnelly, Friesem & Moen, 2013).

The acknowledgement of the importance of fostering youth civic engagement has resulted in a logical drive towards developing programmes and initiatives that facilitate its promotion, with recognition on a wider scale of the need for governments and organisations to support such projects (UNICEF, 2010-11). Research evaluating programmes set up to encourage civic engagement in young people have shown positive results in their effectiveness to develop civic attitudes and facilitate action for social change and have highlighted opportunities to involve young people in the development and governance of such initiatives (Stoneman, 2002). Programmes have varied in their approach and specific focus, for example promoting youth involvement in environmental issues (Johnson, Johnson-Pynn & Pynn, 2007), practical community service (Lee, Olszewski-Kubilius, Donahue & Weimholt, 2007) and youth-led community leadership and organisation (Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013).

The Review

There is a wealth of data on factors that influence the development of civic engagement in young people, however there are few examples of these being drawn together and considered in relation to one another, except for a special issue review by Amna (2012).

While Amna's (2012) review comprehensively evaluates the literature on the development

of adolescent civic engagement, referring to theoretical contributors and proposed developmental models, this has not been conducted in a systematic manner. As such, there is a need to systematically review the literature in relation to proposed models and pathways of the development of civic engagement in adolescents that have been informed by relevant theory and evaluated statistically. This will aid the establishment of a firm understanding of the mechanisms involved in the development of civic engagement. This in turn can inform and contribute to the creation and advancement of programmes which aim to encourage its formation in young people.

This review therefore aimed to identify models and/or pathways of the development of civic engagement in adolescents that are based on or produce theoretical models derived from quantitative studies and statistical analysis.

From these aims the following research question was developed:

Which evidence based and theoretically derived models of civic engagement development in adolescence exist?

Method

Data Sources and Search Strategy

Electronic databases were searched (PsycINFO, PsycArticles, Education Research Complete, Education Resource Information Center and Web of Science Core Collection) regarding theoretically based models of the development of civic engagement in adolescence.

The search terms used were:

(* indicates truncation)

teenage* OR adolescen* OR youth

AND

civic engagement OR civic development

AND

model* OR theor* OR “theor* framework”

Preliminary searches of the literature indicated that the terms civic “engagement” and “development” were more frequently used than “participation” or “involvement” in relation to the concept on which this review was focused.

A limit was set of articles published between 1995 and 2014 as this is the period during which the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY, 1995; United Nations, 2010) has been in place and as such provided a drive for governments, organisations and researchers to further support and facilitate youth civic engagement.

For the purpose of this study youth civic engagement is defined as the active voluntary participation of a young person “in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p.241) with a focus on community involvement rather than on political engagement.

Study Selection (inclusion and exclusion criteria)

Studies **included** in the review met the following criteria:

1. Published between 1995 and 2014.
2. The study was an academic journal article.
3. The study was based on a quantitative design.
4. The analysis of the data was statistical.
5. Participant samples were sourced from large data sets.
6. Participants were aged 13-17 years (adolescence) – this age range was chosen on the basis of the PsycInfo database indexing and Erikson’s (1959) consideration of adolescence as age 12-18 years. Some extension of the age boundaries was allowed either side of this range if a good proportion of the sample participants were aged within these margins.
7. A model of the development of civic engagement was proposed.
8. The proposed model was derived from a theoretical model/concept/framework.

Studies were **excluded** if:

1. The focus or definition of civic engagement was purely political.
2. The study was an evaluation of a specific programme developed to promote civic engagement.
3. The study was qualitative in design. While qualitative research may be used to generate theory, the interest of this study was to empirically test theories rather than generate them.

Study Quality Assessment

The quality of all the selected studies was assessed using an adapted version of the Downs and Black (1998) checklist. The checklist consists of 27 questions relating to the quality of quantitative research with each requiring a “yes”, “no” or “unable to determine” response. From this, 11 questions were selected to assess the quality of the studies that were reviewed. The 16 questions that were not included related to interventions and dropout rates and were not relevant to the studies in the review. A further three questions were included relating to matched control groups and the limitations of the study.

A random sample of three of the reviewed studies was also evaluated by an independent evaluator to assess inter-rater reliability. Any discrepancies between the quality scores reported by the researcher and independent evaluator were discussed until a mutually agreed verdict was reached.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

The information collected from the studies included the design, details of participants, definition of civic engagement, theoretical basis, and the proposed model/framework/pathway. It was not appropriate to carry out a meta-analysis due to the heterogeneity of the methods and measures used in the selected studies.

Details of Included and Excluded Studies

Electronic searches generated a total of 579 results. From these, eight were removed due to being published before 1995 and three were rejected as they were not written in the English language. A further 49 were excluded as they were not academic journal articles and 348 were removed due to participants not being within the specified adolescence age range of 13-17 years. Once duplicates ($n = 30$) from the multiple database results were removed a total of 142 articles were obtained. Following this, the exclusion criteria were applied to the titles and abstracts of the remaining articles resulting in a total of 19. These were examined in full, a final 10 of which were included for the final review. The reference lists of the selected articles were also hand searched. (See Appendix B for Systematic Paper Selection Strategy).

Results

Overview of Selected Studies

In total, ten quantitative studies were selected for the review. Five studies took their sample from longitudinal data (Youniss et al, 2001; da Silva et al, 2004; Boyd et al, 2011; Zaff et al, 2011; Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012), two of which involved information relating to participants of the 4-H study of Positive Youth Development (PYD; Lerner et al, 2005). The 4-H initiative defines itself as a “youth development and empowerment organisation” that seeks to engage young people in “hands-on learning activities in the areas of science, citizenship and healthy living” (4-H, 2014). Alongside this initiative, data has been collected longitudinally to assess what are considered to be the five key characteristics of positive development: competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring (or compassion) (Lerner et al, 2005). The studies consider key factors contributing to or affecting the development of youth civic engagement, from media use (Boyd et al, 2011) to neighbourhood social connectedness (Lenzi et al, 2013) on an international scale. Each study proposes a development model or pathway for civic engagement in adolescence which is theoretically informed.

The main characteristics of each study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Summary of the main characteristics of included studies*

Study	Design	Sample	Definition of Civic Engagement	Theoretical Basis	Proposed model / framework / pathway
Boyd, Zaff, Phelps, Weiner & Lerner (2011)	<p>Questionnaires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent (PQ) - Student (SQ) <p>Measures of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - News media use - Interpersonal Communication: - Communication with parents about politics - Civic Engagement - Civic Duty - Civic Efficacy - Neighbourhood Social Connection - Civic Participation <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structural Equation Modeling 	<p>4-H study of Positive Youth Development (PYD) – longitudinal data</p> <p>N = 728 individuals</p> <p>62% Female 38% Male</p> <p>Female Mean Ages: Grade 8 = 13.92 years Grade 9 = 14.93 years Grade 10 = 15.98 years</p> <p>Male Mean Ages: Grade 8 = 14.07 years Grade 9 = 15.14 years Grade 10 = 16.13 years</p> <p>Ethnicity: American Indian/Native America: 1.8% Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander: 3.6% Black or African American: 8.0% Hispanic or Latino: 8.0% White, Caucasian, not Hispanic: 62.5%</p>	“Participation in and contributions to the activities and institutions of the community and broader civil society” (p. 1167).	Relational, developmental systems models (Overton, 2010)	<p>News Media Use</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Interpersonal Communication (Parents)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Civic Duty Civic Efficacy Neighbourhood Social Connection Civic Participation</p>

		Multiethnic or Multiracial: 1.4%			
Study	Design	Sample	Definition of Civic Engagement	Theoretical Basis	Proposed model / framework / pathway
da Silva, Sanson, Smart & Toumbourou (2004)	<p>Questionnaire measures initially to all at age 15-16 years</p> <p>Subsample contacted for follow-up age 16-17 years—completed the social information – processing task</p> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Principal components analysis - Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses 	<p>Participants from the Australian Temperament Project (ATP)</p> <p>N = 500</p> <p>Male (240) & female (260) adolescents with (182) and without problem outcomes</p> <p>Ages: 15-16 and 16-17 years</p>	<p>Civic responsibility – “attitudes and behaviours that are beneficial to society, particularly prosocial community and political attitudes and behaviours” (p. 230).</p> <p>Community civic responsibility – “behaviours aimed at helping others more remote than family, friends, and the school environment” (p. 231).</p>	<p>Rosenthal’s Model (Rosenthal et al, 1998)</p> <p>Tests:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Development Model (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996) 2. Coping-Competency Model 	<p>Social Developmental Model as best predictor of levels of civic responsibility</p> <p>Significant predictors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer encouragement - Peer participation
Jugert, Eckstein, Noack, Kuhn & Benbow (2013)	<p>Questionnaires</p> <p>Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offline Civic Engagement - Online Civic Engagement 	<p>N = 755</p> <p>Ages: 15-27 years (M=20.5, SD = 2.92)</p> <p>52% Female 48% Male</p>	<p>“individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern” (p. 123).</p>	<p>Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)</p>	<p>Three civic engagement concepts mapped onto the three TPB factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motivation for civic engagement 2. Peer and parental norms 3. Collective Efficacy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer & Parental Norms - Motivation for Civic Engagement - Collective Efficacy - Socioeconomic Status <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MANCOVA - Structural Equation Modeling - Statistical Comparisons 	<p>Ethnicity:</p> <p>German natives: 488</p> <p>Turkish Migrants: 192</p> <p>German resettler immigrants from the former Soviet Union: 115</p>			
Study	Design	Sample	Definition of Civic Engagement	Theoretical Basis	Proposed model / framework / pathway
Lenzi, Vieno, Pastore & Santinello (2013)	<p>Questionnaires</p> <p>Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighbourhood Intergenerational Closure - Neighbourhood Trust & Reciprocity - Neighbourhood Friends - Social Relationships with Neighbours - Non-parental 	<p>Stratified sampling method</p> <p>N = 403 (47.9% male)</p> <p>38 different Italian neighbourhoods</p> <p>Age range: 11-15 years</p> <p>Mean age: 13.6 years (SD = 1.64)</p> <p>After further exclusion: N = 347 participants</p>	<p>“the feelings of responsibility toward the common good, the actions aimed at solving community issues and improving the well-being of its members and the competencies required to participate in civic life” (p. 45).</p>	<p>Norms and collective efficacy model (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000)</p> <p>Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977)</p> <p>Theory of role taking (Selman, 1980, 2003)</p>	<p>Two Pathways</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adolescents may be socialised to civic values 2. Adolescents may develop a strong emotional bond to the neighbourhood <p>Actions/behaviours follow these</p>

	Adults' Civic Engagement - Neighbourhood Attachment - Local Civic Responsibility - Global Civic Responsibility - Competence for Civic Actions - Civic Behaviours Analysis: - Path Analysis - Multivariate Analysis			Psychosocial Theory (Erikson, 1968) Theory of socio-political development (Watts et al, 1999) Social Capital (Putnam, 2000)	
Study	Design	Sample	Definition of Civic Engagement	Theoretical Basis	Proposed model / framework / pathway
Mahatmya & Lohman (2012)	Questionnaires Measures: - Civic Involvement in Emerging Adulthood - Low Community Poverty - Residential Stability - Ethnic Heterogeneity - Parent-Child Bond - Shared Family Activities	National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health; Harris et al, 2009) - a multi-stage, school-based, stratified random sample of 7 th -12 th graders in US (1994-1995 school year) - 4 wave follow up - included waves 1- 3 ('95, '96, '02) N = 7209	Not specified	Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Theory of Human Development Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 1988)	Theoretical model illustrating pathways connecting childhood neighbourhood attributes with family and school social capital in adolescence, and civic involvement in emerging adulthood

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family Cohesion - School Social Capital - Demographics <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Principal Components Analysis - Correspondence Analysis - Attrition Analysis - Multi-level Model Analysis 	<p>Age: 12-18 years</p> <p>Ethnicity: White: 63% African-American: 18% Hispanic: 11%</p>			
Study	Design	Sample	Definition of Civic Engagement	Theoretical Basis	Proposed model / framework / pathway
Matthews, Hempel & Howell (2010)	<p>Structural Equation Modeling</p> <p>Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth Civic Activity - Adult Civic Activity - Youth Civic Interest - Adult School Involvement <p>Parents or adult guardians had also</p>	<p>1996 NHES (National Center for Education Statistics; NCES, 1997)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - probability survey - NHES Youth Civic Involvement Survey (YCI) <p>N = 5442</p> <p>2615 females 2827 males</p> <p>Grades 6-12</p>	<p>“Participation in social associational life, including political and civic participation” (p. 448; Putnam, 1996, 2000).</p>	<p>Social Capital (Putnam, 2000) and Political Socialisation and Intergenerational Status Transmission literatures</p>	<p>Four pathways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) through the transmission of social status 2) by modelling of civic engagement 3) through child’s civic interest 4) through parent’s civic activity in their child’s school

	completed a civic involvement survey	Age: 12-18			
Torney-Purta & Barber (2011)	<p>Data from International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education (CIVED) study</p> <p>Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content Knowledge - Attitudes - Participatory Behaviour - Human Rights Attitudes & Knowledge - Confidence in the Value of School Participation - Openness of Classroom Climate for Discussion <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudinal Cluster Analysis 	<p>Subset of 30,000 students</p> <p>Five Western European Countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Australia - England - Finland - Sweden - United States <p>N = 15,040</p> <p>Age: 14 year</p>	“action in pursuit of social justice” (p. 473).	<p>States need to expand on Bronfenbrenner (1979)</p> <p>Sociocultural Theory (emphasising neighbourhoods, families, schools) (Super & Harkness, 1986)</p>	<p>Developmental Niche Model</p> <p>Five Clusters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Justice 2. Conventionally Oriented 3. Indifferent 4. Disaffected 5. Alienated

Study	Design	Sample	Definition of Civic Engagement	Theoretical Basis	Proposed model / framework / pathway
Warren & Wicks (2011)	Measures (Scales): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political Engagement (parent & child) - Civic Engagement (parent & child) - Shared Political Engagement - Shared Civic Engagement - Parent's Encouragement of Teen Political Talk - School Activities about Politics - Online Political Content Use - Teen Church Attendance Analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statistical Path Analysis 	1291 Parent-Child Dyads Children's Ages: 12 (14.4%) -17 (14.5%) years old (Mean = 14-15 years) 50.5% Males Demographically balanced Children's Ethnicity: White: 77.2% Black: 8.1% Multi-racial (8.2%)	"Activities designed to promote a public good"... e.g. "community improvement projects, charitable efforts or outreach programmes" (p. 158). "hands-on work with others to achieve a public good" (p. 158).	Ecological Systems Theory Bronfenbrenner (1979) – micro, meso, exo and macro system level influences Child Developmental Theory	Race, Parent's Education, Church Attendance ↓ Parent Civic Engagement ↓ Parent civic engagement (inc. child), School class activities about politics, Teen online media activity ↓ Teen Civic Engagement
Study	Design	Sample	Definition of Civic Engagement	Theoretical Basis	Proposed model / framework / pathway
Youniss, McLellan & Mazer (2001)	Measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Background Characteristics - Voluntary Service - Civic Engagement 	Washington D.C. N = 389 Juniors (60%)	Not specified	Social Identity (Erikson, 1968)	Resource Mobilization Approach Crowd Types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School - All-Around

	(principal components analysis) - Crowd Orientation Analysis: - Hierarchical, agglomerative Cluster Analysis	Seniors (40%) 48% Males 52% Females Ages: 11-18 years Ethnicity: European Americans: 80% Minority Groups: 20%			- Average - Fun - Disengaged
Study	Design	Sample	Definition of Civic Engagement	Theoretical Basis	Proposed model / framework / pathway
Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg, Lin, Lamb & Balsano (2011)	Part of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (PYD) Cohort Sequential Longitudinal Design Measures: - Civic Duty - Civic Efficacy - Neighbourhood Social Connection - Civic Participation - Demographic Information	N = 1554 64% Female 36% Male Mean ages: Grade 8 = 14.33 years Grade 9 = 14.87 years Grade 10 = 15.68 years Grade 11 = 16.75 years Ethnicity: Non-Hispanic Whites: 71.4% Latina or Latino: 4.8% African American: 6.8% Asian or Pacific Islander: 2.6%	“an integration of behavioural, emotional, and cognitive factors within the individual...a connection to one’s community, a commitment to improving that community, and the act of helping one’s community” (p. 1208).	Active and Engaged Citizenship construct (AEC) (Bobek et al, 2009; Zaff et al, 2010)	Trajectory Model

	Analysis: - Hierarchical Linear Modelling (HLM)	Native American: 1.1% Multiethnic or Multiracial: 1.2%			
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Characteristics of Research

Methodological Quality of Studies

The quality of the studies was rated on a 14 item adapted version (Appendix C) of the Downs and Black quality checklist (1998) to assess the studies' methodological strengths. The quality ratings ranged from 57% (Matthews et al, 2010) to 92% (Boyd et al, 2011) with the majority of studies scoring 64% or above (see Appendix D for quality ratings). The reduced scores in some cases were due to seven of the studies not having a control group. In five of the studies it was not possible to determine whether or not the samples were representative of the entire population they were recruited from.

Sample Characteristics

Sample sizes were generally large, ranging from 347 (Lenzi et al, 2013) to 15,040 (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011). Two studies (Boyd et al, 2011; Zaff et al, 2011) took samples from the US based 4-H study of Positive Youth Development (Lerner et al, 2005) with a further three studies also sourcing their samples from large national (US and Australia) longitudinal studies (Youniss et al, 2001; da Silva et al, 2004, Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012). Several of the studies were based on large scale surveys (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011; Warren & Wicks, 2011; Youniss et al, 2001). Participants ranged in age from 11 (Lenzi et al, 2013) to 27 years (Jugert et al, 2013). Due to the variance in the adolescence literature regarding the definition of adolescence (Boelema et al, 2014; Peterman, LaBelle & Steinberg, 2014; Turner, Joinson, Peters, Wiles, Lewis, 2014) adolescence was defined as young people aged 13-17 for the purpose of this review. This age group was chosen on the basis of the PsycInfo database indexing and is in line with Erikson's (1959)

consideration of adolescence as age 12-18 years. The majority of the participant samples in the selected studies fell within the adolescence margins of 13-17 years.

Context of Research

All studies included a variety of ethnic minority groups. Sampled populations were from western and western European countries: United States of America (Boyd et al, 2011; Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012; Matthews et al, 2010; Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011; Warren & Wicks, 2011; Youniss et al, 2001; Zaff et al, 2011); Australia (da Silva et al, 2004; Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011); Italy (Lenzi et al, 2013); England, Finland and Sweden (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011); and Germany (Jugert et al, 2013). The German study included “German native youth, ethnic German resettler immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and Turkish migrants” (Jugert, et al, 2013, p. 125).

Measures

All studies used measures that were appropriate for their specific concept or influential factor of interest which resulted in a wide range of tools used. The majority of studies used items from validated measures and scales (e.g. Boyd et al, 2011) while others constructed their own original measures (Matthews et al, 2010).

Definition of Civic Engagement

The studies reflected the lack of consensus in the literature on a specific definition of civic engagement (Amna, 2012). The reviewed studies ranged in their definitions from “hands-on work with others to achieve a public good” (Warren & Wicks, 2011, p. 158) to “action in pursuit of social justice” (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011, p. 473), with two studies not

explicitly specifying their own conclusive definition of the concept (Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012; Youniss et al, 2001) but instead alluding to principles in line with the remaining eight studies.

Overview of Results

Theoretical Basis

In consideration of how civic engagement in adolescence develops, the studies looked to theoretical frameworks and models, as well as previous research, in which to ground their thinking. The key theories are discussed below.

Social Development Model and Coping-Competency Model

Da Silva et al (2004) reflect upon the limitations of Rosenthal et al's (1998) model of civic responsibility development that supports a contextual approach. This model emphasised the influence of belonging to organisations which require or encourage prosocial activity at age 18 years, as well as the influence of family members who volunteer when participants were aged 21 years. The authors of the reviewed study instead put forward a comparison of the Social Development Model (SDM; Catalano & Hawkins, 1996) and the more generic Coping-Competency Model (CCM). The SDM was developed to contribute to explaining "a range of adolescent outcomes and proposes two pathways to adjustment status in adolescence, one leading to antisocial behaviour and another leading to prosocial behaviour" (da Silva et al, 2004, p.233). They draw upon the SDM's focus on adolescence prosocial behaviour and relate it to civic responsibility. The five steps that are put forward as involved in developing prosocial attitudes and behaviour are summarised as:

- 1) Perceived opportunities for prosocial involvement.
- 2) Actual involvement in prosocial activity.
- 3) Perceived rewards for involvement.
- 4) Attachment to like other.
- 5) Belief in prosocial values.

(da Silva et al, 2004, p. 233).

The authors outline how the SDM and its five steps to prosocial attitudes and behaviours highlight specific areas that could influence adolescents in this way, including forming relationships with prosocial peers and involvement with organisations within the community.

The relevancy of the CCM to the development of civic responsibility is proposed due to its focus on adjustment, particularly necessary during adolescence, and understanding the facilitation of an increase in skills, including:

- Effectively problem solving of social issues
- Using effective coping strategies
- Social competence
- Self-esteem
- Activity level
- Approaching novel situations
- Regulating attention

(da Silva et al, 2004, p. 234).

The model acknowledges the role of coping and social competence in supporting psychosocial adjustment. Da Silva et al (2004) comment on how it suggests that alongside the skills listed above, factors such as higher self-esteem and activity levels are indicators

of individuals who are more likely to display civic responsibility through their willingness to seek out and engage with extracurricular activities beyond the contexts of school or home.

Relational Developmental Systems Models (Overton, 2010)

Boyd et al (2011) draw upon relational developmental systems models (Overton, 2010) in understanding the impact of the relationship between an individual and their context on their involvement in their community and wider society. Such models consider the systematic changes that might occur in person ↔ context relations across time and place. The emphasis of Boyd et al's (2011) study is on the mutually influential relationship between adolescents and the context of their media use and the consequent effects on civic engagement.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

In acknowledging the decline of young people engaging in offline civic activities, Jugert et al (2013) consider the potential that the online world might have in re-engaging this population with such issues. They suggest that the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) could provide a behavioural means by which to better understand adolescents' involvement in such areas as civic engagement. Jugert et al (2013) explain the theory's assumption that such behaviour can be understood through the individual's behavioural intentions which are a result of:

- 1) Their attitude toward the behaviour.
- 2) Subjective norm – whether important others will approve of the behaviour.
- 3) Their perceived behavioural control.

The researchers used these key factors to determine a model examining the relationship between those key factors and civic engagement.

Theories Relating to Neighbourhood/Others' Influences

Once again, the wider context in which youth civic engagement develops is considered in depth by Lenzi et al (2013) in the creation of their developmental model. They comment on the utility of several theories in informing contextual thinking. Of note is their reference to the Norms and Collective Efficacy Model (NCE Model; Leventhal & Brooks-Gun, 2000), observational learning (Bandura, 1986) and perspective taking (Selman, 1980, 2003).

Lenzi et al (2013) explain that the NCE Model describes how adolescents might be “socialised to civic norms and behaviours” (p.46) through living in a neighbourhood with a high level of cohesiveness and may therefore encounter more adults who display civic responsibility in neighbourhoods that are more socially connected. The latter point, they argue, links well with Bandura’s (1986) concept of observational learning and explains that opportunities to observe other’s behaviour and its consequences within a civically responsible neighbourhood might facilitate the development of civic engagement in adolescents. Furthermore, Selman’s (1980, 2003) concept of perspective taking through interacting with a variety of people in one’s neighbourhood is proposed as an important factor in an adolescent’s understanding of the values of the context in which they live.

Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000)

Lenzi et al (2013) propose that Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000) can contribute to explaining the development of civic engagement through an understanding of how the

“social processes in the neighbourhood can promote individual resources” (p.47).

Mahatmya and Lohman (2012) refer to the Theory of Social Capital (Coleman, 1988) as contributing to an understanding of how human development is affected by social environments, particularly through how a person interacts with and contributes to their “larger social world” (p.1169). They explain how the theory expands on this by identifying the family and schools as contexts in which social capital is present and influential.

Matthews et al (2010) discuss the connection between declines in social capital and civic engagement and the loss of “social bonds” (p.449) in society.

Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Throughout the literature on civic engagement is a constant reference to the context in which adolescents are living and developing. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development provides a framework in which to consider the impact of the environments that an individual interacts with on their development (Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012). Warren and Wicks (2011) reiterate this by outlining the different influences of the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems on development. However, Torney-Purta and Barber (2012) argue that the ecological model is not detailed enough to encompass the complexity of the relationships within the different systems that might impact on the development of civic engagement.

Psychosocial Development Theory (Erikson, 1968)

Erikson’s (1968) work is cited as a useful consideration in the understanding of youth civic engagement in two of the studies reviewed. Lenzi et al (2013) suggest that Erikson’s concept of the formation of civic identity in adolescence, through social relationships,

allows young people to develop “a worldview and a personal set of values and ideas about their role in society” (p46). Youniss et al (2001) further make reference to the formation of a social identity through relationships that contribute to creating an ethos by which the adolescent lives.

Sociocultural Theory

Torney-Purta and Barber (2011) put forward sociocultural theory as a backdrop for understanding development niches (Super & Harkness, 1986) in relation to social contexts in which people live. They highlight its utility in considering the historical and cultural factors within which people exist due to its attention to how culture shapes the development of young people. In particular, Super and Harkness (1986) identify three developmental niche subsystems for consideration: 1) Physical and Social Settings, 2) Customs and Practices of Child Rearing, and 3) Psychology of the Care Takers.

Ego Identity Theory (Erikson, 1963) and Action Theories (Baltes et al., 2006)

Zaff et al (2011) sought to investigate the developmental trajectories of civic engagement through a consideration of the Active and Engaged Citizenship construct of civic engagement (AEC; Zaff, Boyd, Li, Lerner & Lerner, 2010) which is built upon the integrated construct proposed by Bobek, Zaff, Li and Lerner (2009). As a measure of the civic engagement construct, the AEC model sets out four first order latent factors (Zaff et al, 2010):

- 1) Civic Duty
- 2) Civic Skills
- 3) Neighbourhood Social Connection

4) Civic Participation

These constructs are grounded in Erikson's (1963) concept of the development of a self-identity that meets the needs of society as well as those of the individual. This is thought to operate in addition to the idea of an interconnection between an individual's behaviours and their cognitive and emotional processes, proposed by action theories (Baltes, Lindenberger & Staudinger, 2006) which allude to the influential reciprocal relationships in civic engagement development between the individual and their context. Such action theories pay particular attention to how, over the life span, individuals develop through the impact they have on their context as well as the impact their context has on them as individuals (Brandtstädter, 2006).

Proposed Models

The studies in the review tested their hypothesised developmental influences through statistical analysis in order to validate their proposed models and pathways.

The Influence of News Media Use and Interpersonal Communication

Boyd et al (2011) emphasise the potentially important period that adolescence, as a critical developmental stage in life, presents for exploring young people's interactions with media, particularly as their use of media has increased in recent years (Marsh et al., 2005). They hypothesised that "news media use would be related to indicators of civic engagement, and civic participation in particular, but via an indirect effect of interpersonal communication with parents" (Boyd et al., p. 1169). Their US study investigated this through using measures of news media use, interpersonal communication (communication with parents

about politics), civic engagement, civic duty, civic efficacy, neighbourhood social connection and civic participation with young people in grades 8, 9 and 10 (age 13-16 years). The analysis of the results indicated that the effects were similar across the age groups and provided support for the proposed structural model (Figure 1). They conclude that civic efficacy and civic participation may both be predictable through a combination of adolescents being exposed to media information relating to news content and having discussions with other people about politics and current events. It is suggested that this involves the development and use of vital abilities, such as developing arguments and expressing opinions (Shah, McLeod & Lee, 2009).

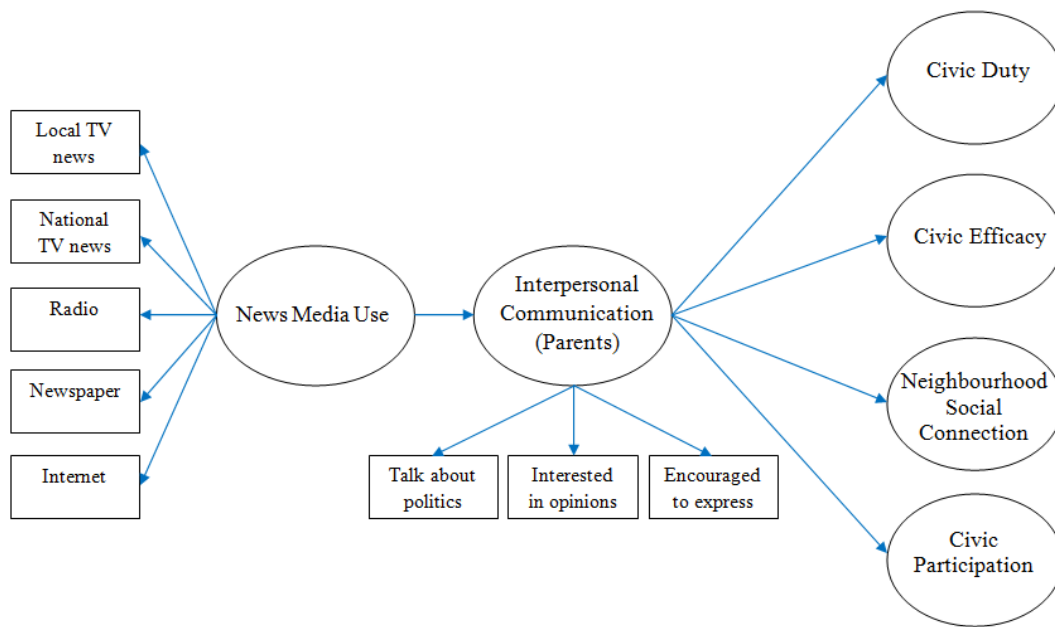


Figure 1. Path diagram for model assessing the influence of news media use and interpersonal communication on civic duty, civic efficacy, neighbourhood social connection, and civic participation (Boyd et al., 2011).

Social Development Model

The comparison carried out by da Silva et al (2004) between the Social Development Model (SDM) and the Coping Competency Model yielded useful results for contributing to understanding the development of youth civic engagement. The key factors within the SDM proved to be best able to predict community and political civic responsibility. These factors included “peer attachment, peer encouragement and participation, attachment to the wider community and family encouragement, and participation and perceived importance of community service” (da Silva et al, 2004, p. 249). These results indicated that community civic responsibility was particularly increased as a consequence of being a member of a civically minded family and experiencing a sense of attachment to peers and one’s community. The study also considered gender differences as the results showed girls to be more orientated to civic responsibility in their attitudes and behaviours. It is suggested that this may be a consequence of the two genders having different experiences in relation to the key factors outlined in the SDM; in particular, community civic responsibility was more often encouraged in girls by family and friends with whom they were more likely to have more positive relationships.

Theory of Planned Behaviour Model

Jugert et al (2013) applied concepts from civic engagement to the theoretical model of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1991)(see Figure 2) to investigate offline and online civic engagement among young people. Of note was the study’s inclusion of participants from various backgrounds and cultures of origin.

TPB:

Civic Engagement:

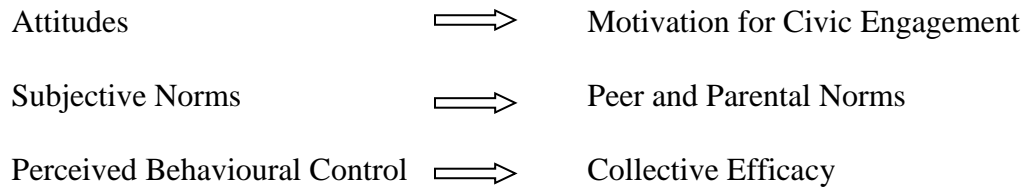


Figure 2. Civic engagement concepts relating to TPB model

Their analysis highlighted a strong relationship between civic engagement both offline and online with motivation for civic engagement and collective efficacy. However, with regard to the relationship between offline civic engagement and peer and parental norms, outcomes were not consistent across the different ethnic groups. The results therefore suggest that the study's model for civic engagement development can be considered as meaningful across cultures for online activity only (Figure 3).

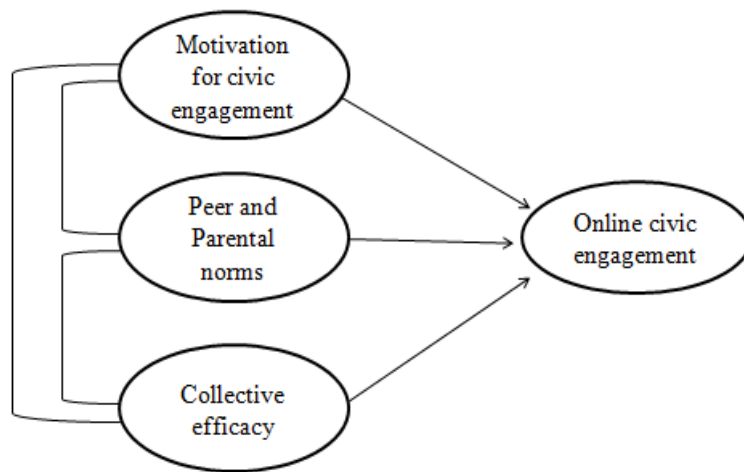


Figure 3. Online civic engagement development model (Jugert et al., 2013).

Pathways of Neighbourhood Influence

The theoretical grounding of Lenzi et al's (2013) research led them to investigate the influence that different aspects of a neighbourhood could have on the development of civic engagement in adolescents, taking into consideration the potentially mediating factors of attachment to the neighbourhood and the networks of non-parental adults. Their analysis provided support for their dual pathway model of civic development (Figure 4). Their key findings included civic responsibility (on a local scale) being promoted through strong ties between adults and adolescents in a neighbourhood, and the increased perception of trust and care within a community being linked to adolescents perceiving the same qualities in their adult's networks. Furthermore, the development of a strong emotional bond to the neighbourhood was also related to strong ties with other people in the local community. Lenzi et al (2013) conclude that there is a relationship between neighbourhood context (including a sense of attachment to it) and the development of local civic responsibility, and also between personal connectedness in the neighbourhood and the perception of being competent to be civically active.

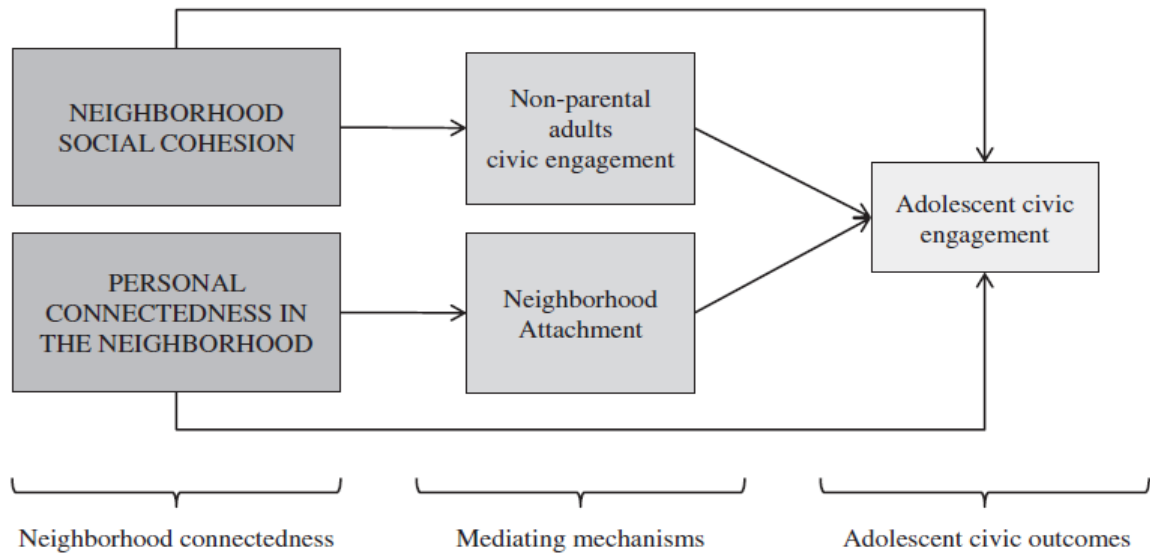


Figure 4. Conceptual model predicting adolescent civic engagement from neighbourhood social connectedness (Lenzi et al., 2013, p. 47).

Pathways of Neighbourhood, Family and School Influence

Mahatmya and Lohman (2012) grounded their study in social capital theory and ecological theory of human development to investigate the role that neighbourhoods, families and schools might play as antecedents to the development of civic involvement in young people. With this, they also considered the impact of specific neighbourhood groups, gender and race. Their analysis revealed support for a pathways model of civic involvement development (Figure 5). It was found that in both the school and family contexts, increases in social capital were connected with later development of civic involvement, with the authors highlighting the importance of promoting interpersonal connections in adolescence. The progression of the pathways were found to differ as a result of the gender, race and neighbourhood group membership of each individual (indicated by vertical dashed line in Figure 5). The authors conclude that their results emphasise the significant influence that

social relationships, which are both positive and supportive in the contexts of families and school, can have on the development of civic involvement in adolescence.

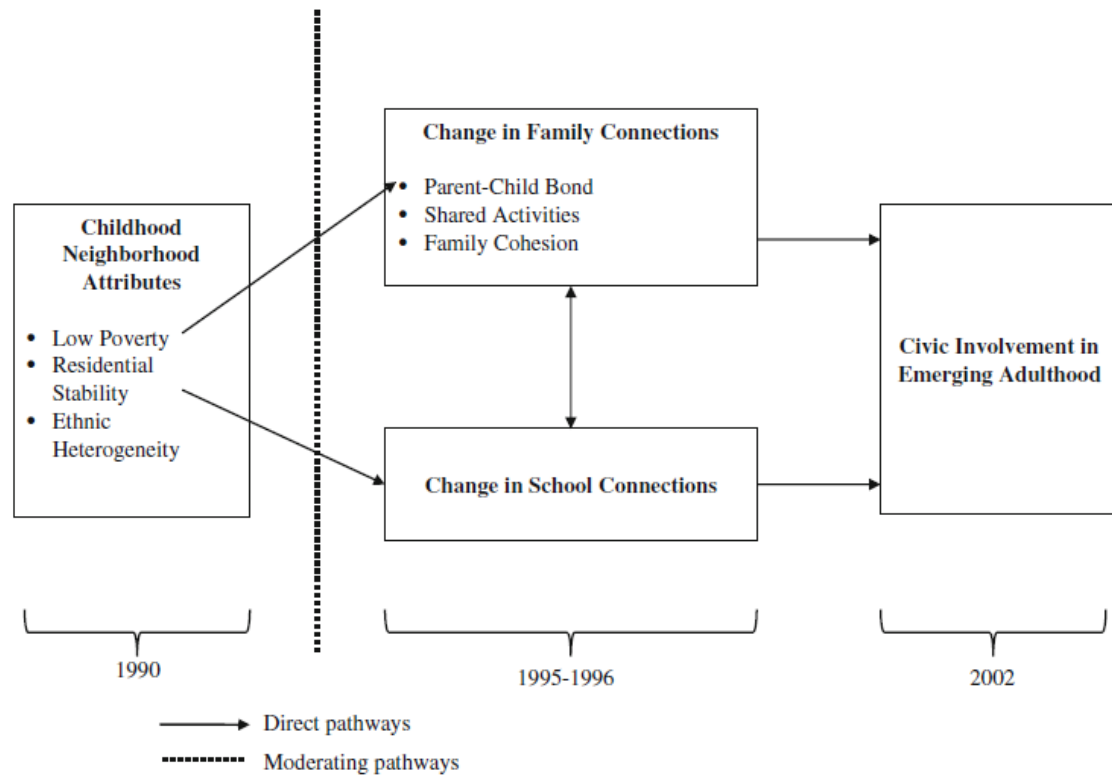


Figure 5. Theoretical model illustrating pathways connecting childhood neighbourhood attributes with family and school social capital in adolescence, and civic involvement in emerging adulthood (Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012, p. 1169).

Transmission Model

Matthews et al (2010) considered the contexts of home and school to investigate the influence of the socialisation of young people to civic life on the development of their civic engagement. Potential differences in relation to gender were also identified as important factors to assess. Four pathways were proposed as having explanatory components for the development of youth civic engagement:

- 1) Through the transmission of social status.
- 2) By modelling of civic engagement.

- 3) Through child's civic interest.
- 4) Through parent's civic activity in their child's school.

The analysis of their results demonstrated support for their model (Figure 6). A key finding was the way in which the transmission of civic engagement between parent and child appears to significantly take place through the parent's involvement with their child's school. With regard to gender difference, the progression of the pathways was generally the same for both genders. However, one exception was the finding that family socioeconomic status (parental education) plays a predictive role in the pathway for females but not for males, and the authors acknowledge that further differences may exist which were not identified through their process of analysis.

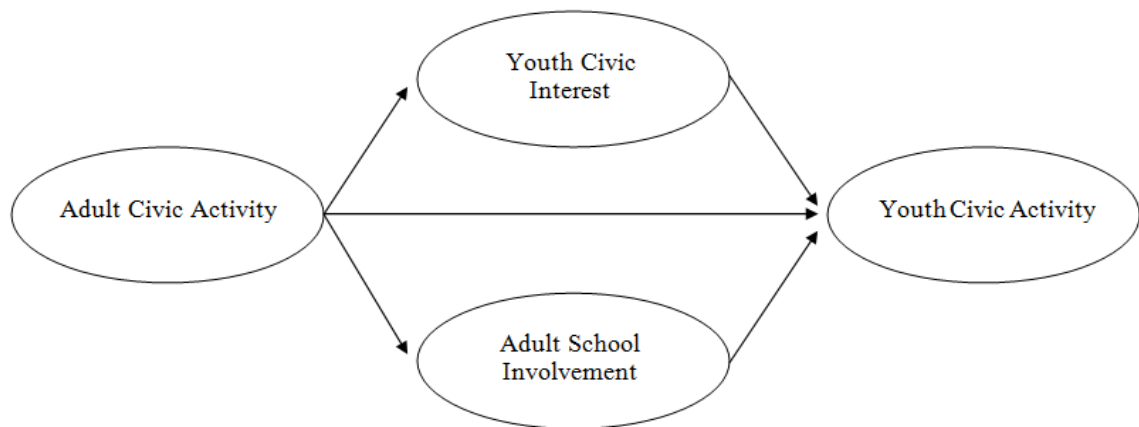


Figure 6. Conceptual model of the transmission of civic engagement from parent to child (Matthews et al., 2010, p. 454).

Developmental Niche Model

Torney-Purta and Barber (2011) draw on the human rights literature to make connections with the development of civic engagement in young people. Using cluster analysis, they clustered their sample into five attitudinal groups: Social Justice, Conventionally Oriented, Indifferent, Disaffected, and Alienated. The experiences of the individuals in each cluster in relation to their schools and local neighbourhoods were also examined. These factors were considered in relation to how they influence adolescents' participation in society, particularly with regard to human rights issues. Their findings provided support for an adapted version (Figure 7) of the development niche model (Super & Harkness, 1986). Of note was the indication that the school context has the potential to reduce negative intercultural attitudes, with positive classroom atmospheres, where pupils are involved in problem solving within their school, shown to contribute to the promotion of human rights. The socialisation of young people in both national and local neighbourhood contexts is emphasised by the finding of correlations between these and their human rights attitudes.

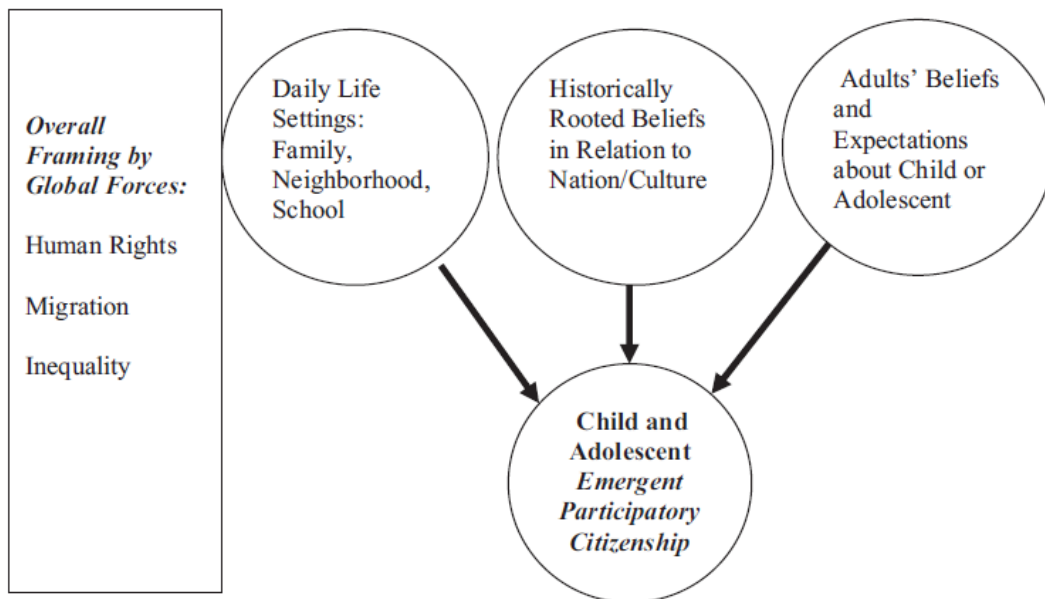


Figure 7. Model of developmental niches for participatory human rights in socioculturally diverse societies (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011, p. 478).

Socialisation Model

In a further study that roots itself within the ecological systems model, Warren and Wicks (2011) make connections between youth civic engagement and socialisation, at both macro- and micro- levels. They take into consideration key factors such as parental modelling, the school context and discussions within the home context, as well as the role that the advancements in technology and media use might play. At a microsystem level the influence of family, schools and media is considered. At a macrosystem level they consider the influence of education, race and religion. Although the study addresses the development of political engagement, for the purpose of this review only their focus on a model of the development of civic engagement in adolescents (Figure 8) will be discussed. Their analysis suggested that the parent's own civic engagement was the best predictor of the adolescent's civic engagement. Furthermore, alongside other significant factors, activities relating to politics within the school context and parents participating in civic engagement jointly with their child were also found to be particularly influential factors. The authors emphasise the overarching significance of parental influence in modelling and socialising their children to civic engagement, particularly during adolescence.

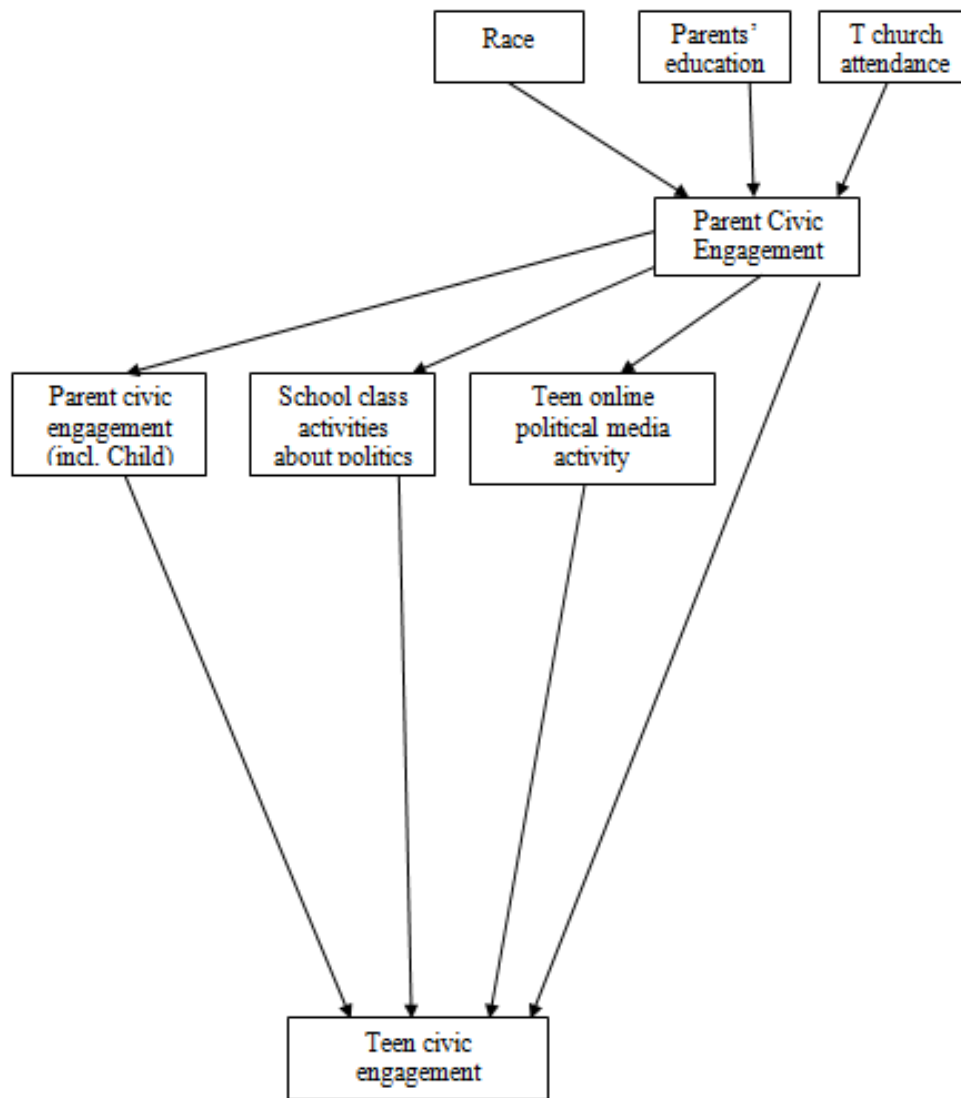


Figure 8. Path model for teen civic engagement (Warren & Wicks, 2011, p. 166).

Peer Group Orientation Model

Working from the premise that identity development in adolescence is influenced by one's peers and daily activities, Youniss et al (2001) examined the impact that such factors have on the development of civic engagement. The sample's type of volunteer service, civic engagement, and crowd orientation (based on the importance they attributed to certain attitudes and behaviours) were measured. Participants were grouped into one of five crowd types: School, All-Around, Average, Fun, or Disengaged. Analysis revealed significant

associations between crowd membership and civic engagement, and crowd membership and service type. The results suggested that adolescents become involved with particular types of service as a result of their peer group orientation, which expose them to certain kinds of adult networks and voluntary contexts. The authors put forward the resource mobilisation approach to the concept of civic engagement, arguing that adolescents who take part in daily activities with like minded peers and adults are also more likely to be involved with organisations that endorse such behaviour. This in turn means that the particular attitudes and behaviours displayed by the individual is reinforced in many of the contexts of their daily life.

Developmental Trajectory

Building on the Active and Engaged Citizenship (AEC; Zaff et al, 2010) construct of civic engagement, Zaff et al (2011) acknowledged the utility of understanding how the individual components of the AEC develop and change over time. They sought to investigate this with consideration of contextual factors that might contribute to predicting such trajectories across different time points; in particular, youth development programme participation and involvement in religious institutions. The study reports six main findings in relation to developmental trajectories of civic engagement in adolescence:

- 1) During early adolescence, the extent to which each component of civic engagement was demonstrated varied, with a high sense of duty but low activity participation.
- 2) Across the measured period of adolescence there was variance in the rate of change of each component, with civic efficacy seeing the greatest rate of change.

- 3) The AEC components were found to be affected by youth development programme participation and religious attendance, interestingly with higher rates of AEC development in those demonstrating less participation.
- 4) No gender differences were identified in the developmental trajectories.
- 5) Rates of change across the trajectory for each AEC component were negatively affected by involvement in youth development programmes, except for civic efficacy.
- 6) All AEC components' rates of change were positively affected by religious participation

While the participants demonstrated high levels of civic duty and efficacy, with a sense of connection to their neighbourhoods, these levels were not replicated in the extent to which they participated in civic actions. Therefore, the authors stipulate that more opportunities for adolescents to engage in civic activities should be made available that are developmentally appropriate to points at which these young people feel most “capable and willing to participate” (p. 1216).

Discussion

Summary of Key Findings

Reviewing the ten studies has highlighted the utility of grounding developmental models in theoretical frameworks for gaining better understanding of the concept of civic engagement in adolescents. While a range of theories were referred to, it became evident that the Theory of Social Capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000), Psychosocial Theory (Erikson, 1968) and Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) were particularly relevant to the study of youth civic engagement. The pertinence of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory emerged with the repeated finding across the studies of the significant role that context, namely neighbourhoods, schools and the family home, plays in the lives of adolescents and the development of their civic engagement. Interwoven with this was the relational aspect to civic development whereby the influence of peers, parents and neighbours were shown to be key factors. The impact of aspects of adolescents' wider contextual life was also acknowledged in the studies, including the media, religious institutions and youth development programmes, through their capability to model and foster civic attitudes. Evidence was also provided to demonstrate the changing trajectory of the components of civic engagement in its development through the formative years of adolescence.

The significant role of peers and community fits in with the general understanding of development at this life stage. In line with Erikson's (1974) theory of development, da Silva et al (2004) reflect on the increased importance of a young person's attachment to their peers and the wider community throughout adolescence. Furthermore, the slightly reduced influence of parents, in comparison, is supported by Moretti and Peled (2004) who highlight the changes in parent-child attachment during adolescence. They emphasise the

difficulties experienced by parents during this period in seeking out new ways to support their children, as adolescents endeavour to develop their own autonomy. As the review has demonstrated, parents are still influential in the development of adolescent civic engagement; however the extent of this influence must be understood within the context of the state of change these relationships are experiencing.

The increased presence of media and technology in the lives of adolescents has led to a drive in research to better understand their impact on young people in a variety of domains. With regard to engagement in society, specific types of online activity have been found to affect youth political engagement (Bakker & de Vresse, 2011). Further research on the relationships between various forms of media and civic engagement more generally would allow for more informed conclusions about the potential media holds to positively encourage young people to engage with their communities and wider society. Exploration of the possible negative effects might also be helpful in considering whether the overload of information provided through modern technology may in fact be fostering certain apathy in young people with regard to thinking about civic action and engagement. Correlations have been found between heavy media use and low personal contentment, with self reports of unhappiness and boredom in young people (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010). This raises questions about a possible information overload that perhaps could lessen the emotional impact of civic issues and which could consequently negatively influence the likelihood of civic engagement.

The discussion around young people's intentions to be civically engaged raises questions about the reliability of these intentions to equate to action in the future, as highlighted by

Zaff et al's (2011) proposed trajectory model. Their study indicated that young people's high levels of civic duty, efficacy and sense of connection to their neighbourhoods did not result in similar levels of participation in civic activity. This has consequences for the wider application of Jugert et al's (2013) model based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), particularly with its limited consideration of the access that an individual might have to resources and opportunities to enable them to put those intentions into action. As such, it may be difficult to draw conclusions as to the likelihood of youth civic engagement based on this model alone due to its simplicity; motivation, peer and parental norms, and collective efficacy may not be sufficient in predicting actual civic engagement among young people. Limitations of the theory's applicability have been highlighted (Armitage & Conner, 2001), with suggestions that in other arenas, such as health, intentions do not necessarily lead to successful behaviour change in the long term for all cases (Norman, Conner & Bell, 1999). Future research employing a longitudinal design would enable a better assessment of the validity of this theory for predicting young people's active civic engagement.

Research has also highlighted the need to attend to the specific experiences of ethnic and religious minority groups in relation to youth civic engagement (Torney-Purta, Barber & Wilkenfeld, 2007; Jaffe-Walter, 2013). The varied socio-historical backgrounds of these populations contribute to the complexities involved in engaging them in wider society and have implications for the development and implementation of interventions in pursuit of this goal.

Limitations of Studies and Review

While the studies found empirical support for their theoretically based models, there are inevitably a number of areas in which the results and conclusions are limited in their quality and utility.

The main limitations are found within the samples of participants selected in each study which have consequences for the generalisability of results.

Firstly, participants for all the studies were from westernised countries (US, Australia, Western Europe). While large samples were used, often from longitudinal studies, the conclusions can only go so far as to offer an understanding of youth civic engagement development in westernised populations. While some of the larger survey studies made efforts to account for variance in ethnicity within their samples (Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012; Matthews et al, 2010), it was often difficult to determine whether these were truly representative of the population they were sampled from. Consideration should also be given to possible confounding variables, such as poverty, that are perhaps overlooked through the absence of accounting for different ethnicities. This raises questions over whether the proposed models are in fact missing key components that would be applicable to other, non-westernised countries and their cultures.

Secondly, there appears to be little consideration within the models of the contextual experiences and differences among minority groups, which could provide valuable insights into the development of civic engagement among a variety of populations. As Jugert et al (2013) suggest, future models would be strengthened by involving more minority groups in research. In addition, there is no mention of the civic engagement of adolescents with

physical or learning disabilities. Although culturally there may not be as broad a difference in their experiences, the context of the daily lives of young people with disabilities could potentially have an impact on their development of self-efficacy and sense of connectedness with the community, both of which are identified as key components of civic engagement.

Statistically, many of the conclusions from the studies are based on correlational or associational results. Despite providing valuable information regarding the relationships between important influential factors, the nature of the results means that conclusions around direction of causality cannot be made. Furthermore, the quality ratings reflect a wide variation in quality in research design (Coolican, 2014) and suggest that future research should attend to ensuring samples are representative of the entire population and consider the use of control groups that are matched on demographic variables.

As previously outlined, common themes and factors were found among the various studies. However, although many of the results overlap with one another, there does not appear to be one “super model” that is able to account for all of the components of the different developmental models in relation to youth civic engagement. Not only do the theories and models vary, the definitions upon which they rest are also diverse. Therefore, it is difficult to come to an overarching conclusion about the definitive nature of the proposed models in the studies. Furthermore, the variance in the studies’ quality ratings suggests that some of the studies, with higher scores (e.g. Boyd et al, 2011; Zaff et al, 2011), may present stronger conclusions than others (e.g. Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012).

Many of the studies examined particular elements of youth civic engagement development which points to the potential suitability of an integrated model that further explores the relationships between the influential factors that are indicated. The lack of a “super model” also draws attention to the need for consideration of other theories on which to base such an integrated developmental model. Kohlberg’s theory of moral reasoning (1969) stands as an additional theory that could contribute significantly to such a model. The stages outlined in this theory, particularly stages three to six, would relate well to the key themes from the reviewed studies; especially the noted influence of peers and the community. These four later stages proposed by Kohlberg (1969) that are relevant to civic engagement are:

- 3) Good Interpersonal Relationships – developing good intentions and skills in empathy and concern for others.
- 4) Maintaining the Social Order – developing a concern for society more broadly, with obligations of duty, and obedience to law and authority.
- 5) Social Contract – developing a genuine interest in the welfare of others, awareness of individual rights and values, and social mutuality.
- 6) Universal Ethical Principles – developing respect for universal principles, awareness of demands of individual conscience, and understanding of justice.

Therefore, the consideration of the development of individual moral reasoning could provide greater understanding of the internal factors involved in determining youth civic engagement. The absence of significant consideration of psychological theories such as Kohlberg’s suggests there is a need to broaden and deepen the theoretical grounding of future civic engagement developmental models.

The process of the review itself also highlights a number of limitations. The decision to only include studies from 1995 means that any relevant research before this date will have been missed. However, all of the included studies were published within the last 15 years which suggests that this is the period of time during research into civic engagement has really grown. A further limitation is the margins set for the age of participants in the studies. Despite allowing some leeway either side of the 13-17 years age limit, it is possible that some studies may use an older aged sample of participants but that consider to some extent the development of civic engagement in adolescence retrospectively. While acknowledging the importance of the sense of transition and change during adolescence, limiting the review to this life stage alone means that other influential and formative developmental processes in earlier life have not been considered.

The poor consensus on the definition of civic engagement is a real problem. This may be a reflection of the wide range of disciplines that have endeavoured to investigate the concept within their own perspectives, including psychology (community, environmental and developmental), sociology, psychiatry, journalism and education. While the difficulty in coming to an all-encompassing definition reflects the lack of consensus within the literature, it is possible that the review may have excluded relevant papers as a consequence of misinterpreting the specific terms used in other studies to refer to the same concept. Furthermore, the exclusion of studies that focused solely on “political engagement” raises an additional issue. In several of the included studies political engagement was discussed alongside civic engagement under the premise that they share several common processes. The reviewer had anticipated that the focus of more politically driven papers would draw attention away from the concept of voluntary and community based civic engagement. It is

therefore possible that relevant influences and processes in other developmental models may have been overlooked.

Clinical Implications

The majority of studies included in the review make a point of looking towards informing the development of programmes that encourage and foster the necessary components of civic engagement in young people (da Silva et al, 2004). Zaff et al (2011) draw attention to the need to apply the understanding of the trajectories of civic engagement components in order to identify the optimum point at which to direct interventions in the lives of adolescents in a positive and influential manner. Such intervention programmes could take a number of forms. Lenzi et al (2013) emphasise the importance of the neighbourhood as a context for this work and suggest a focus on building relationships with neighbours and providing opportunities for community involvement. Furthermore, there is a “need to tailor interventions more closely to the needs of specific ethnic groups rather than to use a one-size-fits-all approach” (Jugert et al, 2013; p.132). As such, while the reviewed studies provide a greater understanding of the development of civic engagement in adolescents, the practical application of this information is what holds real value and meaning for the lives of young people and their contribution to society.

The importance of connectedness, with families, peers and neighbourhoods, is emphasised by the studies in this review. Therefore, the implication is that in order to have engaged adolescents such connections need to be fostered in young people by society. Perhaps the development of programmes such as the 4-H initiative could be expanded to a more international level to facilitate connections between adolescents and communities, with consideration of the varied needs of different ethnic and cultural groups. In addition to

efforts to encouraging engagement during adolescence, early intervention programmes could also be valuable. An example of this would be the Sure Start children's centres (Department for Education, 2013) in the UK. These have a focus on supporting families with young children and could be essential for nurturing connectedness between parents and children.

Further opportunities to foster youth civic engagement would be available through expanding to additional contexts, for example school based intervention programmes including, perhaps, a reassessment of the presence of citizenship values on national curricula. This might not only educate young people on civic issues but also provide a format in which discussion and debate can be encouraged in order to allow the topic to have deeper significance to younger generations.

Conclusions and Research Directions

In conclusion, the review of ten studies that propose theoretically grounded models of civic engagement development in adolescence has highlighted significant influential factors. The importance of considering the individual's context as well as the relational processes within a framework of Social Capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) and Ecological Systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) theories has been particularly emphasised. The developmental trajectories of different aspects of the civic engagement concept have also been outlined in relation to important influential factors.

Directions for future research would first have to address the issue of defining civic engagement. The success of developing an all encompassing model would be dependent on

the collaboration of multiple disciplines, particularly in working towards a unified definition of civic engagement across different perspectives. Future consideration should be given to pursuing ways in which to bring together the efforts and contributions of the multiple disciplines to produce more focused direction in research.

Secondly, the involvement of a wider spectrum of nationalities, cultures, ability ranges and minority groups must be considered in order to address issues around the generalisability of research findings. Future investigations into the development of civic engagement in adolescence would also need to move forward from relying on mainly correlational studies. This would contribute to the development of a more specific causal “super model” that could encompass all previously researched and identified influential factors.

With the development of intervention programmes to promote positive relationships and civic engagement in young people, future research would also be valuable in exploring the practical application of models such as those reviewed in this paper, as well as creating processes by which the intervention programmes can be effectively evaluated. The ultimate goal is for young people to be engaged in their communities to foster positive societies. The above steps would help in this development.

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.Part Two

Empirical Paper

Aspiration Formation in Looked After Children

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Please see Appendix A for the Guidelines for Authors.

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Aspiration Formation in Looked After Children

Abstract

Long-term future outcomes for looked after children are often very poor, including increased unemployment and mental health difficulties. Research has highlighted the need to further investigate the relationship between the experience of being looked after and future prospects. The future orientation literature provides a conceptual framework of future goals. The current study explored looked after children's "ideas for the future" and influential factors on their formation. Seven participants (3 male, 4 female) in foster care and aged 12-16 years took part. Participants completed a photography task and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyse qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews. Participants described future aspirations that map onto the future orientation framework. Five main themes emerged: "The past influencing the future"; "External and service influences"; "Personal identity"; "The importance of environment" and "A process of stages". Results are discussed with reference to current future orientation literature. Clinical implications and directions for future research are outlined with consideration of the responsibility of wider systems to support and encourage looked after children in developing and achieving future aspirations.

Key words: *Looked After Children (LAC), Future orientation, Aspirations, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)*

Introduction

Aspirations for the future can vary greatly from one person to the next, and result in the uniqueness of each individual's life as they go through the different stages of their personal development. Aspirations and future goals shape people's major decisions and determine their behaviour. Strauss, Griffin and Parker (2011) assert that a future-orientated identity contributes to motivating people to take action to try and achieve their goals. However, mystery still remains regarding how exactly these aspirations are formed and why there is such variance between groups of people.

Data regarding the longer term future outcomes of children who have left care has been collected on numerous occasions, resulting in some striking findings (Department for Education, 2013). Positive outcomes are reported to be linked with a developed sense of security while in care (Cashmore & Paxman, 2006). However, educationally, compared to their peers, looked after children are much less likely to remain in full-time education after age 16, and are more likely to be unemployed after leaving school (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). In terms of their educational participation and attainment, looked after children generally fall below the average levels achieved by other children (Tilbury, Creed, Buys & Crawford, 2011).

Links have also been made between spending time in foster care during childhood and homelessness in adulthood. Among homeless populations a large proportion of individuals have previously been in foster care (Roman & Wolfe, 1995), and it has been suggested that this may have an influence on the length of time that a person is homeless for (Piliavin,

Sosin, Westerfelt & Matsueda, 1993). In addition, looked after children are also more likely to have mental health problems (Buchanan, 1999; McAuley & Davis, 2009).

These studies demonstrate the need to explore further the relationship between the experience of being looked after as a child by local authorities and the future prospects of these individuals. Although a good percentage of looked after children do not go on to face difficulties in life, it is still imperative to explore the possible differences between these children that may lead to such varying outcomes. Through this, ways in which those at risk can be helped in a preventative manner earlier on in their lives could be identified. The increased likelihood of these young people to experience difficulties in multiple areas of their lives points towards the need for an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach (McAuley & Davis, 2009; Golding, 2010).

Bostock (2004) emphasises the importance of helping young people from difficult backgrounds to look to the future and develop goals that they can work towards. This benefits them through creating a sense of stability and control in their lives. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the formation of these aspirations in such individuals. Through a better understanding of this process, care services can be better equipped and prepared to support, encourage and facilitate healthy development. While efforts have been made towards developing multi-agency ways of working in services for looked after children in recent years (NICE, 2010), there is little evidence for the perceived impact of this from the perspective of this population.

A number of key concepts need to be considered in relation to the formation of aspirations. The integration of these concepts could lead to the development of an aspiration formation model.

The formation of an individual's identity will have an effect on the way in which they develop a perception of themselves. It is therefore important to consider firstly Erikson's (1968) life stages and identity development model in order to identify possible ways in which a looked after child's development might be disrupted as a result of their often difficult circumstances. Identity formation is closely linked with the development of the self-concept. These are also impacted upon by an individual's levels of self-efficacy (as outlined by Bandura, 1982), self-esteem (Ryeng, Kroger & Martinussen, 2013; Luyckx et al, 2013) and attachment experiences (Bowlby, 1969; Zimmermann & Becker-Stoll, 2002). The relationships between these factors have the potential to significantly influence the decisions looked after children make regarding their futures and the likelihood to which they will be successful in their choices. Resilience is also crucial when considering how likely it is that these young people will achieve their goals and aspirations for life (Masten, 2014).

The literature surrounding future orientation helps to clarify these issues further. Seginer and Lilach (2004) summarise the conceptualisation of future orientation as being made up of three key variables which relate to four prospective life domains.

Key Variables:

- 1) Motivational – the value of the prospective life domain; the expectance of success; a sense of internal control over goals, plans and their materialisation
- 2) Cognitive Representation – domain specific hopes and fears
- 3) Behavioural – the exploration of future options; the commitment to pursue one specific option

Prospective Life Domains:

- 1) Social Relations
- 2) Marriage and Family
- 3) Higher Education
- 4) Work and Career

The model proposes that the combination of the main elements of the motivational variable provokes the cognitive representation (second variable) of the future self, as well as behaviours (third variable) that are related to these future ideas (Seginer & Lilach, 2004).

These three overarching variables are further described as being applicable to the four prospective life domains. Seginer & Lilach (2004) outline the classification of the prospective life domains on “two dimensions: their theme and distance” (p. 628).

Therefore, the domains are classified by the authors as follows:

Themes:

- 1) Relational Domains: Social Relations, Marriage and Family
- 2) Instrumental Domains: Higher Education, Work and Career

Distance:

- 1) Near Future Domains: Social Relations, Higher Education
- 2) Distant Future Domains: Marriage and Family, Work and Career

The concept of future orientation in adolescence has been researched widely. Research on influential factors has highlighted the role of parents (Neblett & Cortina, 2006), the family context (Nurmi, 1991) as well as broader contextual (e.g. sociohistorical) systems (Schoon & Parsons, 2002). In contrast, research investigating future orientation among looked after children is limited. However, correlations between certain groups of looked after children, such as those with fewer mental health difficulties, and future orientations that are hopeful and positive have been found (Polgar & Auslander, 2009). Sulimani-Aidan and Benbenishty (2011) also outlined the future expectations and worries of Israeli adolescents prior to the transition out of care, drawing attention to the role of biological families and peers. Despite this, there remains a gap in our knowledge base on the actual formation of aspirations and development of future orientation for children in care.

The current study aims to address this gap by seeking to gain a greater understanding of the future aspirations of young people in care and the factors that influence their development. Through accessing a personal account of these directly from the young people themselves, the data collected can be used to inform the systems that exist around the individual on how best to support and encourage them from multidisciplinary perspectives.

The following research questions were developed in order to direct the exploration:

- 1) What do looked after children identify as life goals?
- 2) What influences the formation of looked after children's aspirations for the future?
- 3) What aspects of the looked after environment impact on these young people's perceived ability to attain their life aspirations?

Method

Design

In order to explore the formation of long-term aspirations in looked after children, a qualitative methodological design was employed with the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) and photo elicitation (Samuels, 2004).

Photo Elicitation

The looked after population is made up of many young people, some very vulnerable, who have experienced severe distress and whose home life and education may have been repeatedly disrupted. Engagement in research therefore is a special challenge. It is important for young people to feel supported in their narratives and drawing on both verbal and non-verbal techniques could be helpful to lessen comparisons with school, and general performance assessment. Therefore, a process which reduces the initial need for verbal expression but that allows the gradual elaboration of ideas, whether verbally or visually, may be especially helpful. Auto driven photo elicitation is a research method that involves participants taking photographs and then being invited to talk about these with a researcher during an interview (Samuels, 2004). Research has demonstrated the utility of photo elicitation (Collier, 1957) across a variety of disciplines, particularly sociologically and educationally (Harper, 2002) and its applicability in working with numerous populations (Epstein, Stevens, McKeever & Baruchel, 2006; Mandleco, 2013). Croghan, Griffin, Hunter and Phoenix (2008) outline the opportunity that photo elicitation provides for young people to reveal aspects of who they are without the initial need for words, thus allowing certain ideas to be highlighted that might otherwise have been difficult to express. Through

making the decisions about what to photograph and being provided with a context in which to explain their choices, the young people are given a platform from which their voices can be heard, a process that in itself can act as intervention (Mandleco, 2013). The agency and control that the young people have over the content and focus of the interview helps to address the power differential that often exists between them, as participant, and the researcher (Pyle, 2013). Additionally, taking the social constructionist perspective, the interview element of photo elicitation can also contribute to “bridging gaps between the worlds of the researcher and the researched” (Harper, 2002, p20) through a process of developing understanding. Despite its increasing use, photo elicitation is a novel methodology in research with looked after children. Unlike many previous photo elicitation studies, the current study did not intend to specifically document the photographs that were taken by the participants due to the sensitive and protected nature of their lives and the content of their photographs.

Participants

In total, seven looked after children aged between 12 and 16 years (Appendix K) were recruited and assented to participating in the research with the consent of their foster carers. Each child was on a care order under section 31 of the Children’s Act (1989), whereby the local authority holds parental responsibility for the young person, and was placed in a foster placement.

In order to maintain the standardisation of the sample, children with moderate to severe learning disabilities were excluded from participating in the research. Furthermore, the qualitatively exploratory nature of the study might have been too demanding and could

cause distress as the interview was not adapted to make it accessible to a range of ability needs. The inclusion of children with moderate to severe learning disabilities would also have required a screening stage during recruitment in order to assess their level of need with regards to adapting the study's procedure. Adherence to the inclusion criteria would allow for rich standardised data to be collected.

Procedure

Recruitment

Once ethical approval was obtained and the local authority's research governance committee was consulted, the Looked After Children and Fostering Services in the local area were approached in order to recruit participants. Initial contact was made with social workers in these teams and research information (Appendices E & F) was provided. The social workers then approached the children and their foster carers who met the inclusion criteria and provided them with further information about the research and what their participation would involve (Appendices G, H, I & J). Following this, the social workers facilitated contact between the researcher and the interested participants in order to arrange an initial meeting.

The researcher met with each participant over two sessions.

Session 1:

During the initial meeting, further information was provided for the participating child and their foster carer before obtaining assent from the young person and consent from the carer (Appendices L & M). Photo-elicitation (Collier, 1957) was used as a data collection

method and the photography task was explained to each participant. This involved providing each participant with a digital camera for a period of one to three weeks and asking them to take photographs of their “ideas for your future” (Appendix N). They were asked to select approximately 10 of these photographs to bring to the second session.

Session 2:

The second meeting took place either at the child’s home or in a research interview room at the local university. A digital dictaphone was used to record the interviews which lasted between 12.19 – 44.54 minutes (Mean = 28.58 minutes; Median = 32.43 minutes; Range = 32.35 minutes).

The interviews began with participants being asked about their experience of the task, before being invited to share their selected photographs with the researcher. A semi-structured interview (Appendix O) devised by the researcher was used to engage each participant in conversation about their choice of photographs, the meaning behind what each one represented for them and the importance they attributed to it for their future. A debrief sheet (Appendix P) was provided for the participants at the end of the interview.

Analysis

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety by the researcher with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996) employed as the methodology to analyse the data. A worked piece of transcript from one of the interviews outlining this process can be found in Appendix Q. Credibility checks of the emergent themes and interpretations were conducted through supervision and peer IPA reviewers.

Results

The interview transcripts were analysed using IPA. A total of 21 themes were generated through the analysis and were then grouped into 5 super-ordinate themes. These included “The Past Influencing the Future”; “External and Service Influences”; “Personal Identity”; “The Importance of Environment”; and “A Process of Stages”. The sub-ordinate and super-ordinate themes are outlined in Table 2, below.

Super-ordinate Themes	Themes
<i>1. The Past Influencing the Future</i>	1.1 Creating something similar to past experiences 1.2 Creating something different to past experiences 1.3 Contact with birth family 1.4 Experiences defining the future
<i>2. External and Service Influences</i>	2.1 Opportunities provided in foster placements 2.2 Influence of Significant Adults 2.3 Influence of School-based Services 2.4 Continued contact with foster family 2.5 Media Influence
<i>3. Personal Identity</i>	3.1 Status and Appearance 3.2 Personal characteristics determining the future 3.3 Sense of agency over the future 3.4 Working Hard 3.5 Academic Achievement 3.6 Future Identity in Relationships
<i>4. The Importance of Environment</i>	4.1 Space creating a sense of peace 4.2 Creating a positive environment for others 4.3 Physical proximity

<p>5. <i>A Process of Stages</i></p>	<p>5.1 Personal certainty and the future's unpredictability</p> <p>5.2 Stages to life and realising one's ideas</p> <p>5.3 Employment being pivotal to achieving aspirations</p>
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Table 2. Themes and super-ordinate themes generated by the analysis

Super-ordinate Theme 1: The Past Influencing the Future

This super-ordinate theme involved aspects of the young people's lives and previous experiences that were influencing their thoughts about their future. These experiences ranged from memories of spending time with a member of their birth family to the process of being "looked after" in foster care.

Theme 1.1: Creating something similar to past experiences

Nostalgia became apparent in the way some of the young people gave reasons for a number of their ideas for their future. A process of wanting to reconnect or recreate their happier memories from childhood in their future was revealed in their explanations. Lucy talked about how she would like to have a car when she is older as it would mean being able to

"go to places where I've been like when I was a child and stuff" (Lucy: lines 145-146),
such as the seaside, explaining that

"it would be nice to remember my childhood memories" (Lucy: line 152).

Similarly, Ethan described his deep longing to one day own a Lamborghini because

"my dad has one...and since he's got one I've always wanted one" (Ethan: line 20).

Ethan also talked about how his passion for wanting to be a driver and a football player in the future has been inspired by the time he spent with his birth father when he was younger:

“my dad used to teach me when I was little how to ride a car” (Ethan: line 348), and *“I’ve just always liked it [football]...when I was a kid my dad...my real dad used to lark at football with me”* (lines 181-182).... *“he used to teach me how to kick a ball...and since then I’ve always liked it”* (Ethan: line 184).

Their conversations illustrated how their past experiences of their birth families were shaping their ideas for creating something similar in their futures.

Theme 1.2: Creating something different to past experiences

In contrast to the above theme, creating a future that would enable them to have different experiences to those in their past was important to some of the young people. Much of this related to the family context. Jamie talked about how in his future family, their motto would be

“never leave your family behind, even if they’ve left you behind...you still keep them back”

(Jamie: line 119),

suggesting an important bond between the members. Ethan also referred to the need for regular contact with the extended family, stating:

“I haven’t seen them in seven years, my whole family” (line 414)... *“that’s why I want my kids to know their family”* (Ethan: line 418).

Natalie explained that her future role in her family would be different to what she had witnessed in her birth mother:

“I’d do what my mum didn’t do to me...and...it would just be like really good”

(Natalie: lines 166-167).

There was almost a determination in Natalie that her children would have childhoods very dissimilar to her own upbringing:

“it’s the fact I haven’t had a proper family so I...kind of like that for my children”

(Natalie: line 361).

She likened her hopes for her children to the happiness that she saw in the children at her respite placement:

“I’ve not really had that sort of family upbringing so I’d quite like that for my children”

(Natalie: line 157),

and she had specific ideas about what that would involve:

“being in different homes and like not knowing what’s going to happen...I don’t really want for my kids” (line 343) ... *“they’d be in one spot, whereas I’ve moved around a lot”*

(Natalie: line 160).

With memories of some of the more difficult experiences in their lives, it was clear that these young people were hoping and planning for complete difference in their futures.

Theme 1.3: Contact with birth family

Considering the people that might be in their lives in the future, maintaining or resuming contact with birth families was often important.

Marcus and Lucy stated that they would like to have contact with their birth families in the future and explained the roles they would play in their lives. Marcus outlined the mutually supportive purpose of such contact:

“meet my old family, go back to my old family” (line 379)... “because if I need help they can help me out or if they need help I’ll help them out” (Marcus: line 415).

Meanwhile Lucy talked about her birth family assisting her in achieving her future goals:

“I want my family like with me in the future” (line 4)... “cos like they’re there to help me if I need them or anything”... “like give me advice and everything” (Lucy: lines 12-13).

Through contact in the future, Ethan and Evie pointed to a hope of building relationships with family members. Ethan highlighted the presence he would want his birth family to have in the lives of his own children:

“cos they’re my family...and...on weekends I’m going to take my children there...so they know who their family is” (Ethan: lines 206-207).

Evie talked of her wish to reconnect with a sister she was no longer in contact with:

“my little sister, she’s adopted but I really want to see her again when I’m 18...well basically when she’s 18 and hopefully she’ll come looking for me cos I can’t go looking for

her” (lines 464-466)... “I really want to get to know her and watch her grow and things...it would make my day just to see her” (Evie: lines 474-475).

Despite the current distance between the young people and their birth families, it seemed that a renewed closeness was desired for their future.

Theme 1.4: Experiences defining the future

For some of the interviewees, currently being in foster care had a direct influence on what they felt was important for them to aim for in their futures.

Jamie explained that he wanted to reciprocate the way he had been cared for by different people:

“I just think if they’ve helped me I should be there helping other people.....you’ve not just been put on this earth to cause trouble and be a pain, you’re put on there for a reason....and that’s what I believe in.... I believe if you’re on this earth you’ve got a reason to help” (Jamie: lines 382-385).

Evie talked about how her experiences mean she has important experiences that she could share with other children in foster care:

“I really want to foster...cos I’m in foster care and really know how it feels” (line 125)...“I’ve been in that situation...in this situation and.....I know how it feels like....to be at home where it was all dangerous whereas here (foster placement) you’re really safe and

*happy....you know no one's going to hurt you or anything....so it's like really safe
here....so....I know that hopefully if I start fostering then it will change somebody else's life"*

(Evie: lines 283-287).

Super-ordinate Theme 2: External and Service Influences

The nature of being in the care system means that a range of professionals and services become involved in the lives of these young people. This second super-ordinate theme encompasses the impact that the participants perceived such individuals and services to have when thinking about and defining their ideas for their futures.

Theme 2.1: Opportunities provided in foster placements

Foster placements put these young people in contact with a number of different people.

Jamie spoke about his thoughts and feelings regarding social workers:

*"I'm not really keen on them just because they're social workers and they move you
around, but erm.... I think they're there for you and help you, and I think they understand
you more than you think they do"*

(Jamie: lines 380-382).

However, he went on to explain his previously mentioned point about how people helping him has encouraged him to feel a responsibility to help others in his future.

Marcus explained that being enrolled with the cadets has been an important factor in developing his plans to join the army and stated that he initially became involved with cadets because

“when I came here [foster placement] the boy that was here a while ago was in cadets”

(Marcus: line 268)

and had had conversations with Marcus about his experiences.

For Natalie, the opportunity to spend time with younger children while at her respite placement allowed her love of children to grow and helped her to decide which age group she would like to work with in the future:

“It’s been really good to get to play with a child who’s that young” (Natalie: line 296).

Similarly, Evie’s experience of joining a foster family with their own biological children has enabled her to experience family life in a positive way:

“I came into foster care and I just...everyone was saying that I’m really good with children....and then when Milly was born I fell in love with children”

(Evie: lines 17-19).

Being part of Milly’s life allowed Evie to grow in confidence relating to young children and observing Milly at nursery helped her to decide she would like to be a nursery nurse in the future.

Theme 2.2: Influence of Significant Adults

The input of foster carers and voluntary services and groups was often described.

Several participants talked about having previously spoken with their foster carers about their ideas for their future:

“I’ve spoken to Mandy [foster carer] about what I wanted to be” (Leah: line 214)

“I could ask these lot in here [foster family]...talk to them about it...just like give me advice or anything” (Lucy: line 189)

“Jen and Lee have [talked to her about her future]”... “and my social worker...and my mum and dad and sisters” (Evie: lines 447-449)

Marcus identified his involvement with the cadets group as having helped him to

“improve my passion about the army...realised what hidden potential I did have which I didn’t have before” (Marcus: lines 271-272) .

Cadets also featured in Jamie’s comments about what has helped him think about his future, particularly in relation to joining the army:

“with cadets, like mentors...half of them have been in the army, been on tour, so they know what you’re on about” (Marcus: lines 244-245).

Natalie and Jamie both reflected on what their foster carers do and could do in future to support them in achieving their aspirations:

"I've got people in my life that help me, for instance Tom [foster carer], he helps me, irons my uniform, he's someone that you can talk to really to understand"

(Jamie: lines 243-244)

"Probably Chris [foster carer]"... "Well he could kind of like talk through what I need to do to get to there"

(Natalie: lines 124-126).

Support for Ethan came from time spent with a worker from a voluntary organisation who encouraged him in his passion for driving:

"my SOVA worker....she lets me do the gears in the car" (Ethan: line 350).

Theme 2.3: Influence of School-based Services

The school context was often important for the development of occupational and educational ideas.

Natalie was able to confirm her desire to work with children:

"I've been on work experience and I enjoyed it....and I went back again"

(Natalie: line 83).

Jamie was able to access specific educational support through a worker that he described as being “*a maths and English teacher that helps*” (line 284).

Teachers had also played a role in Evie’s consideration of different career paths:

“*my maths teacher said I should be a teacher...a maths teach cos I’m really good at maths*”
(lines 435-436)... “*and my English teacher said that I should be a story writer because I’m really good at writing stories*” (Evie: lines 438-439).

Marcus referred to future orientated conversations with a “*careers manager*” (line 449) and Natalie explained what it had been like speaking with a “*learning mentor*” (line 129):

“*she kind of like tells you like... what you want to do when you’re older.... what you want to do at college.... and she talks to you about any of your problems, your worries about it... so yeh, it’s really good*” (Natalie: lines 131-133).

Theme 2.4: Continued contact with foster family

Foster carers also featured as significant individuals with whom these young people hoped to be able to remain in contact in their futures.

Leah said that she expected her foster carer to still be in her life in the future because

“*I’ve lived with her for so long*” (Leah: line 191)

and Evie described how she hoped that the entire foster family would continue to be a part of her future life:

“Milly and Maya and Jen and Lee and everyone” (Evie: line 185).

Natalie had even considered the practicalities of how such contact with her foster carer would be maintained:

“We’ll probably like meet up once a week to like go through what’s happening each week, or just a phone call” (Natalie: line 182-183).

Theme 2.5: Media Influence

Television, films and videogames were mentioned on a number of occasions in relation to information or inspiration around their ideas for their futures.

Jamie described how he could identify with the character played by Vin Diesel in *The Fast and The Furious* films, explaining:

“Vin Diesel is like a role model to me like...he likes fast cars and he likes just bending the rules really...and with a family, he has friends that he believes as family because he’s done loads of jobs and stuff with them and they’ve bonded together and that’s really like me”
(Jamie: lines 114-117).

Playing the video game “Midnight Club” helped Ethan think about what colour he would want his future car to be:

“I’d probably have it in like a white....or baby blue....cos I’ve got a game that you can get in your car, and I’ve got a baby blue one” (Ethan: lines 296-297).

Evie illustrated how the television and film industry had made her think about what different jobs would entail:

“I’ve seen like loads of films that are on about jobs and stuff” (Evie: line 380).

Super-ordinate Theme 3: Personal Identity

This third super-ordinate theme covers the range of subordinate themes that related to the specific aspects of the young people’s identity at an individual and personal level. These themes include how they wish to be perceived by others in the future, the responsibility they feel in achieving their goals and the practicalities of how they will get to where they want to be.

Theme 3.1: Status and Appearance

Every young person spoke about having a job as being part of their vision for their futures. All bar one (Leah) of the female participants stated that they wanted to work with children and two of the three male participants expressed their plans to embark on careers in the army.

The idea of having nice possessions (mainly houses and cars) in the future was frequently mentioned, particularly in relation to the responses that such material things would evoke in other people, as well as in the individual they belonged to.

Lucy explained that she wanted a big house like the ones she had seen on a street nearby that had caught her attention:

“I want to get like a nice house and everything” (line 90)... “cos I went by (a nice house) and went ‘oooo’!” (Lucy: line 94).

Ethan described how he would like to be able to stand out from the crowd by having a striking car:

“I don’t want a plain normal car....I want like a different car” (line 282) ... “Cos a load of people look the same like each other...like the same stuff” (Ethan: line 292).

The feeling of owning and driving around a car was something that appealed to Jamie:

“It’s fast...cars are fast and I’m not really...I wouldn’t say I’m a boy racer but I wouldn’t mind testing it... erm...cars really...just drive you around really, but to show off to other people that I’ve got a car... it’s a little bit of a buzz” (Jamie: lines 45-47).

Jamie also explained the personal significance of owning his own house:

“buy my own house not rent it or out so I can say that it’s my own, and at least I’ve got something to be proud about and not just renting something” (Jamie: lines 62-64)

and what he hoped that would mean for his own children:

“...it’ll be left on for generation to generation” (Jamie: line 69).

For many of these young people, having a house of their own often provided the context in which they imagined their future families and the positive relationships and activities that would occur within the walls of these homes.

Theme 3.2: Personal characteristics determining the future

Jamie and Marcus talked about some of their characteristics which they thought would be important for them to have in order to achieve their future goals. They both acknowledged how their involvement in cadets had helped them to develop these characteristics:

“It shows the hidden bit like respect, discipline, responsibility that I don’t show to most people” (Marcus; lines 149-150; in reference to a photograph of him standing at attention)

“cos I’ll be honest I ain’t one of the smartest people who are loudmouths, trust me when I say that...I do have an attitude and I do have a loud mouth...but with concentration and patience with me I can literally pull off some of the most highest tasks on my own...some of the most annoying tasks on my own...even with my sister jeering at me”

(Marcus: lines 125-130)

“I need to prove to myself....I need to say if I want to go in the army I’m going to have to grab it and grab it more” (line 212-213)... *“discipline, I think that’s the most vital part for*

me is discipline” (line 222)... “when you mess around at (cadets) you get disciplined and you have to do press-ups...or you run around or do something really big and you’re not going to do it again” (Jamie: lines 224-226).

In thinking about the process of deciding what she wanted for her future and how she was going to get there, Natalie stated that she is

“quite a strong person, so I’ve already set my mind out to what I want to do” (Natalie: line 53).

A sense of independence was apparent in many of the young people’s conversations about working towards achieving their aspirations:

“No I don’t need anything, I’m just used to it.....I’m used to working hard” (Ethan: line 234)

Theme 3.3: Sense of agency over the future

In addition to the independence expressed by many of the young people, several also described a sense of personal agency over what might happen in their future.

Marcus explained how he felt it was important for him to take

“responsibility for my own actions and not let anyone else get in the way of it”

(Marcus: line 225).

In response to questions around the feasibility of his ideas for the future becoming reality he stated

“the only thing I would say would probably let me down is my own, myself”

(Marcus: line: 309).

Despite this, he also demonstrated a confidence in his own ability to achieve, even in the face of a level of uncertainty:

“in the end I just know I’ll do it somehow” (Marcus: lines 429-430).

Similarly, Jamie commented on the changing nature of life:

“you’ve got ups and downs in your life...it’s what happens in life...summit happens like that but you’ve got to know what to do” (Jamie: lines 162-165).

He also talked about how he manages with these ups and downs:

“I can adapt in different situations and I think I’m pretty good at adapting cos I’m used to it” (Jamie: line 170).

Theme 3.4: Working hard

Throughout the discussions with the young people about their ideas for their futures it became clear that they were aware of some of the harder aspects to realising their aspirations.

Jamie expressed this understanding thus:

“everything is not free in your life, you’re going to have to buy it and or you’re going to have to work for your money” (Jamie: lines 174-175).

Lucy also echoed his statement: *“work hard and everything”* (line 71).

The concept of money being the product of the effort that’s put into one’s job was emphasised by Evie:

“depends if I’ve got the money and if I work hard at my job and things” (Evie: line 276).

Ethan acknowledged the necessity of hard work in order to achieve at school, which in turn might help him in getting a job:

“buckle me head down” (line 341)... *“Work a lot hard at school...get good GCSEs ...earn for your job cos if you don’t you won’t get it”* (Ethan: line 228).

Theme 3.5: Academic achievement

The potential power that's held within academic achievement to assist in realising one's aspirations was highlighted by almost all of the young people. For many, it seemed that a good education was viewed as necessary preparation and the first stepping stone to getting to where they wanted to be.

"be good at nearly....not all the subjects but some subjects" (Evie: line 147)

"At school....cos you don't know what you're going to need so you've got to get a high grade in a lot of stuff cos you don't know what's going to be" (Ethan: lines 343-344)

Higher education was often mentioned as an option for developing academically:

"I need to go to college and get good grades and get a job and everything"
(Lucy: line 64)

"go to college and just study" (line 72)... "you have to have a real good degree and be like...experienced cos....you're not going to get very far if you aren't experienced"
(Leah: lines 59-60)

Natalie was very clear about what qualifications she needed to be able to reach her goal of running her own nursery:

"you've got to be able to get a level three in child care cos then you can start your own nursery and you can work in a nursery at the same time" (Natalie: lines 96-97).

Similarly, Jamie understood what standard he would have to meet in order to be accepted by the army:

“you won’t be able to get in [to the army] if you can’t write and things.....or you can but you’ll have to do some more work on your maths and English” (Jamie: lines 265-266).

Theme 3.6: Future Identity in Relationships

The important role of relationships with different people and the sense of belonging that these engender was seen as valuable in the present and hopeful for in the future.

A need for relationship was emphasised by Marcus:

“in this day and age you need someone” (Marcus: line 417),

who talked about his plans to join the army and what this would mean for him,

“the army look after their own and I just want to throw my lot in with that lot”

(Marcus: lines 248-249).

Jamie also talked about his desire to join the army and how relationships in this context would be likely to develop:

“you get to find friends that might be your work colleagues but like I say family...might be work colleagues but you class them as family because you’reyou’ve grown in training with them...you’ve gone from training with them to going on tour... and you know from when you go on tour each other’s got your back...and that comes to the other friends bit

again...erm...take a bullet for your friends...or if they're in a fight you'd go back down for [them]" (Jamie: lines 198-203).

Similarly, Ethan referred to the need for relationship, explaining:

"everybody needs to know who their family is...cos if they didn't...in the future they're going to be like searching for them" (lines 211-212) ... *"cos if you didn't have a family you'd be lonely"* (Ethan: line 170).

Jamie outlined how a sense of belonging can develop within friendships, describing one friend as

"like a brother to me" (Jamie: line 129)

and stating that he intends to still have contact with him in the future. He explained further that

"once you get to bond with them...you're more... get to know them a lot more and then once you get to know them it's like yourself...you're part of different bits"

(Jamie: lines 146-148).

Returning to family links, Evie expressed her plans to have her own biological child and what her understanding of this special bond would be:

"it be would your very own" (line 127)... *"not somebody else's. It's nice to have somebody else's but it's even nicer to have your own"* (line 129)... *"I guess when it's your own baby it*

feels like you're in love with it...but if it's somebody else's you're in love with it but it don't feel like your own" (Evie: lines 133-134).

Super-ordinate Theme 4: The Importance of Environment

The fourth super-ordinate theme encapsulates the meaning that these young people attribute to their physical and emotional environment.

Theme 4.1: Space creating a sense of peace

The value of space, whether indoors or outdoors, and the sense of peace that comes with it was often talked about as something to which these young people aspired.

This chance to experience peace was frequently apparent in the hope of one day having a garden of one's own.

"It's just...peaceful...like you can just sit out in your garden and listen to trees and birds flying all over" (lines 234-235)... *"it's good for like if I have children to run around... they're not kept in one particular indoor space...so they're allowed to like...run around"*

(Natalie: line 216-217)

"I would like a nice garden" (Ethan: line 61)

"your children can just go play [in the garden] while you're like tidying up the house or you're doing something and like again it keeps them occupied and things"

(Evie: lines 311-312)

This was also expected from an opportunity to live in the countryside and close to nature.

“it’s just in the countryside I find it more peaceful, isolated” (line 343)...“there’s no distractions” (line 346)...“less crime, more fun” (line 355) (Marcus)

“it’s peaceful isn’t it so it kinda like makes you feel relaxed being there”
(Natalie: lines 20-21)

“it’s like nice open space and you’ve got your own land and you don’t have to worry about anyone else coming and annoy...well disturbing you...so you can do anything really”
(Jamie: lines 7-9)

“when you look out the window you just see loads of birds and it’s like really nice to look at and they’re all like cheeping away in their nests and stuff”
(Evie: lines 106-107)

Evie also described the opportunities that outdoor community living had given her and how she hoped to continue experiencing these in the future:

“It’s just a really nice, quiet street and like you meet really nice people down here” (line 160)...“when you’re on the green belt when you play there’s people walking past and they always say morning....cos you get to know the dogs and the people like loads so when they go past you know like most of the people” (Evie: lines 178-180).

Similarly, Lucy commented that she would want to live near a park: *“cos I want to like work with children and children will be on the park”* (line 47).

The sense of space and peace was also described in the context of these young people's future homes.

“a big house with twirly stairs” (Ethan: line 53)

“like the kids have space to run around...like their own room...I mean like they've got their own room...and then another room where toys are” (Ethan: lines 81-81)

“I think I talked to someone who had a nice big house and they was all...not posh but...they know what they want...they were happy...and I think when it comes to people in small houses they say they're alright but they're really not...it's too small or too cramped”
(Jamie: lines 15-18)

“Freedom really...it [space] makes you feel more happier...comfort sort of”
(Jamie: line 11)

Theme 4.2: Creating a positive environment for others

A desire to, in some way, give something back to the community was often expressed. Ethan described the environment he hoped he would create for his own children in the future:

“they’re going to be safe in my house” (Ethan: line 87).

For Evie, this was important for her plans to become a foster carer herself:

“But you need to make sure that your house is safe first and that you’re like.....in a clean environment and stuff in your house” (Evie: lines 297-298).

Natalie explained the reciprocity that could be experienced through living in a village community:

“because I like living in a small like area because everyone knows everyone so you can all like help out and everything” (Natalie: lines 5-6).

She outlined how her own observations of the needs of other people had inspired her to want to do something to help:

“I’ve always been looking at day nurseries and I was thinking what happens to kids who don’t have like...parents at night time with them...and it made me think like...maybe if I created that sort of thing, like a day and night nursery... it would be convenient for like parents and for children cos they’ll know you as a nursery nurse or whatever but they’ll also know you as someone who’s there for them” (Natalie: lines 106-110).

In a similar way, Jamie reflected on the place of young people in society and his hope to set up a youth club:

“I was thinking, wow, things need to change” (line 433-434)... “what happens if a gang fight went off...someone could have died...and that’s what I was thinking...if there was a youth club...less of those people could be...that person that punched him might not have been there...might have been at the youth club enjoying themselves and that wouldn’t have happened so there’s different stuff there...” (Jamie: lines 473-477).

Theme 4.3: Physical Proximity

In order to maintain contact in the future with individuals currently in their lives, the need for physical proximity was frequently referred to.

Marcus and Lucy explained how they would continue to regularly see their birth families:

“keep close to them” (Lucy: line 27)

“I’d just keep in touch with them and not live far from them” (Marcus: line 387)

Ethan talked about living close to his friend in the future:

“I wanna live in an area around here...well not exactly round here...but you know my mate who I lark with” (line 128-129)... “cos we’re real good mates, we know it’s going to last” (Ethan: line 138).

Super-ordinate Theme 5: A Process of Stages

The fifth super-ordinate theme represents a thoughtfulness that was demonstrated by the young people to the process and likelihood of their aspirations becoming a reality in their futures. This often involved a consideration of their control over the future, the order in which different things should happen and what might contribute more heavily to determining the outcome for their ideas.

Theme 5.1: Personal certainty and the future's unpredictability

Despite having clear ideas about what they wanted for their future, several of the young people talked about the uncertainty around whether or not these ideas might come to fruition.

“Don’t know, cos like...it’s not always gonna happen” (Leah: line 232)

“I can’t really look into the future so I don’t really know if I’ll succeed or fail” (Evie: line 65)

Lucy explained why she felt it was important to think about what she wanted for the future:

“so I know really what to do so I’m not just standing there...not like knowing what to do”
(Lucy: line 176).

There was some awareness of timescales. For instance, Natalie said that she believed achieving her aspirations would take:

“I’m going to say about ...maximum 20 years” (Natalie: line 44).

However, Evie’s awareness of time meant that she did not feel any urgency to have to plan for the future currently, at least in terms of future education:

“but it’s in three years so I don’t need to think really” (Evie: line 218).

Marcus described his thoughts regarding dealing with the unpredictability of the future:

“life has its own way...I’ll go with the flow” (line 466)... *“I’ll let life take its course”* (line 469)... *“I’ll worry about the bridge when I get to it”* (Marcus: line 481).

Theme 5.2: Stages to life and realising one’s ideas

There was an awareness that for one’s aspirations to become reality then a number of steps would have to be worked through first.

While confident of achieving her goals, Natalie outlined the order in which different events might happen in her future life:

“I think so if I do well at school....and then get a job....and then save up money”
(Natalie: line 37).

Evie explained how some things need to be in place before she contemplates working towards her other aspirations:

“well you need to get a job before you do anything and you need to get a house and a car and a boyfriend” (Evie: lines 143-144).

Jamie talked about how he attributed a different level of priority to each of his aspirations:

“that’s not urgent no...I can wait for that...” (Jamie: line 53; in reference to getting a car).

He stated what he felt he needed to work towards first:

“You need to have a job.....a stable job with a good inload of money.....then it’ll be money, and then it’ll be using money for a house, firstly putting little payments down, and bigger payments as you get a better wage, so you get to pay for your full house” (Jamie: lines 185-187)

Theme 5.3: Employment being pivotal to achieving aspirations

All of the participants expressed their desire to be employed in the future and it became clear that, for many of them, their job would open up the opportunities they needed to make progress towards their other aspirations.

“the job [is most important]...so I can like get money and everything so can start me off”

(Lucy: line 210)

Ethan explained how his different career options (footballer; fireman; racing car driver) would provide him with the funds he felt he might need in the future:

“cos you get a lot a lot of money and that’s a really lot of money...and I want to get nice stuff when I’m older” (Ethan: lines 46-47; in reference to being a fireman)

“I want to be a footballer when I’m older...and you get a load of money...so I know I might be able to get it” (Ethan: lines 26-27; in reference to buying a Lamborghini car).

For Marcus, joining the army offered the promise of helping him to make many of his aspirations for the future a reality:

“Well basically in the army I see it as a good careers choice because it can help me master a few of those responsibilities, help me learn new things, help me go round the world, see new cultures, meet new people..er...make me bring out the positive side of myself and make me make something of my life”. (Marcus: lines 242-245)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the formation of looked after children's future aspirations. The main aims were to identify ideas this population of young people have for their own futures and to begin to gain an understanding of what key factors contributed to their development. In addition to this, it was also considered how these ideas map onto the theoretical framework of future orientation (Seginer & Lilach, 2004). Participants completed a photography task and IPA was used to analyse the data collected through semi-structured interviews.

Summary of Main Findings

The participants in this study outlined a variety of ideas for their futures, ranging from embarking on a career as a footballer to being part of setting up a community youth club. Despite this variety, common themes were identified.

The main themes are mapped onto the theoretical framework of future orientation, as outlined by Seginer and Lilach (2004). This specifies three key variables that relate to four prospective life domains.

Key Variables:

1) Motivational

Many of the young people expressed a passion for their ideas and a strong desire for these to become reality. Several had given careful consideration to how likely it was that they would be able to achieve their goals and there was a general sense of independence and personal agency over this process. This is in line with Erikson (1959) who suggests that during this period of adolescence young people are faced with the psychosocial crisis of

identity verses role confusion. As such, adolescents strive towards independence as they seek to establish their identity.

2) Cognitive Representation

Each individual was able to describe a number of their hopes for the future which related to specific domain categories. Of note was the lack of any mention of fears for the future which may have been the result of participants presuming a positivist (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) expectation from the researcher.

3) Behavioural

Despite acknowledging some ways in which they could actively pursue their aspirations, several of the young people outlined their thoughts around the unpredictability of the future and their decision to respond to life on a more moment to moment basis. In contrast, some had intentionally sought out further information regarding what might be required of them in order to achieve their goals, for example specific college courses and skills for army applications. Many were able to identify which single idea for the future was most important to them and highlighted their commitment to pursuing it. Beal and Crockett (2010) connect the first and second variable by stating that the literature suggests behaviours that are focused on achieving future aspirations are motivated by future-orientated cognitions.

Prospective Life Domains

1) Social Relations

Maintaining contact with current social networks was often highlighted as an important idea for the future, with a number of the young people able to name specific “best friends”

that they hoped would still be a part of their lives. Social relationships with others in the wider community, such as with neighbours, were also identified as hoped for. This is in line with research that indicates a shift occurring during adolescence with closeness and interdependence moving more towards peers than family members as adolescents begin to widen their social connections (Laursen & Williams, 1997).

2) Marriage and Family

All, bar one, of the interviewees discussed plans to have a family and children in the future. Some had very specific ideas of who their family unit would include and what their role would be within it. This might be surprising considering the inconsistent parenting this group of young people are likely to have received. A supportive parenting style displayed by an individual's mother has been shown to be positively correlated with increased expression of hopes for future family in adolescents (Jambori & Sallay, 2003). Conversely this may be related to motivations of putting right mistakes their parents made in the past. It is difficult to contemplate how children in foster care might achieve such aspirations without intervention from the wider care systems. This has implications for the attention that is given to forming positive and supportive attachments in foster placements and the resources that these young people have access to more generally.

3) Higher Education

The pursuit of higher education was recognised by most of the young people as necessary for them to achieve their goals. This was the case even when the individual was unsure of what specifically they wanted to do as a future career, with education almost being viewed as a good foundation to fall back on in uncertain circumstances. This may be a reflection of

schools' encouragement, and even pressure, during adolescence to perform well on examinations that determine entrance to further education courses in the near future (Jambori & Sallay, 2003). In an economically difficult time, jobs straight after school are perhaps also an unrealistic expectation.

4) Work and Career

The desire to be in employment in the future was expressed by all participants, many of whom had very specific ideas about what areas of work they wanted to focus on. All of the female participants, except one, stated that they would like to work with children. Two of the three boys stated that they planned to join the army in the future. Gottfredson's (1981) theory of circumscription and compromise in relation to adolescent occupational aspirations posits that from the age of 14 years components of the self concept develop more noticeably, including personal values, skills, interests and personality (Leung, 2008). The theory suggests that in considering their occupational aspirations, adolescents make judgements based on the extent to which different occupations connect with their own sense of self. The participants in this study highlighted how their experiences had influenced their ideas for the future, most probably through impacting on the development of their personal identity as Gottfredson's (1981) theory suggests.

Aspiration formation

Key Influences

Another focus of the study was to explore the factors that influence the formation of aspirations in looked after children. The analysis of the interview data presented a clear sense of past experiences, such as time spent with biological parents or family trips to the

seaside, influencing the decisions these young people were making about what they wanted for their futures. Such early experiences can be considered as contributing to forming aspects of these individuals' learned behaviours, as outlined by social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), and consequently what they aspire to for their future.

There were also examples of current circumstances in foster care providing opportunities to develop their ideas as well as exposure to different situations and networks of people. Key adults in the lives of these young people also appeared to influence their thinking with regard to future options. Such significant adults were present in a range of contexts and included teachers, foster carers and mentors. These findings should be considered within the frame of attachment theories (Bowlby, 1969). Discussing secure-attachments, Moretti and Peled (2004) consider adolescents' reduced need for support through parental proximity, but rather a sense of security in the knowledge of support even if the parents are not present. This may have implications for understanding the attachments between children in care and their foster carers. The provision of a secure base from which to explore the world with confidence may be offered through foster placement relationships. As such, these relationships could support young people in developing and striving towards their future aspirations.

The influence of media was highlighted through conversations around films, television programmes and video games. These often sparked ideas about the possibilities that are sometimes available in the world and provided "role model" characters for them to help develop their future identity. Role models present power to both positively and negatively influence adolescents (Hurd, Zimmerman & Reischl, 2011) highlighting the responsibility

of the media to thoughtfully monitor the nature and presentation of such characters, whether fictional or not.

Another common factor was the opportunity to have future orientated conversations with another person. Often those who had previously spoken to an adult about their ideas for the future had more detailed understandings of what some of the necessary processes might be for achieving their goals. Certainly research has shown how having conversations with adolescents about particular prosocial behaviours, for example volunteering, is linked with their increased likelihood to perform such behaviours in the future (Ottoni-Wilhelm, Estell & Perdue, 2014). In contrast, participating in the study reportedly offered the first opportunity for some of these young people to discuss in detail what thoughts they had about what the future might hold for them. While previously having such future orientated conversations was often considered helpful, the breadth of the content of these discussions was brought into question as they often consisted of questions regarding the domain of future work and careers alone. One participant commented that it was good to be able to talk more generally about his ideas for the future through taking part in the study, giving rise to the idea that perhaps this would be a useful intervention for young people in care

The Role of Society in Response

The desire to give something back to society as a result of their own personal experiences was expressed by three of the seven participants. One spoke of her strong intention to foster and adopt in the future as she felt she could offer these children an understanding of what it feels like to be in the care system. Another reflected on her experiences of working with and being around young children and outlined her plans to set up a day and night nursery

for people whose work prevents them from being able to look after their children during unusual working hours. Additionally, a further participant reflected on the potentially violent and antisocial behaviour that groups of young people might become involved with on the streets should they have nowhere else to go. He demonstrated a desire to meet this need in his local community through his idea of setting up a youth club for young people. Altruism and the desire to contribute to social change are known to motivate individuals in their career choices, for example social work, (Stevens et al., 2010; Bradley, Morgen, Maschi, Ward & O'Brien, 2012). It is therefore consistent with the literature that the personal experiences and values of these young people influenced their ideas for the future. Evidently there are individuals among this population of looked after children that have a great deal to offer society, with a real sense of reciprocity being important to them. Stronger relationships with peers and a sense of attachment to the local neighbourhood are connected with young people's engagement with their community (da Silva, Sanson, Smart & Toumbourou, 2004). In response to this, society could strive towards addressing the barriers that prevent these factors from being promoted in the lives of looked after children. Therefore, more opportunities for this population to realise their prosocial aspirations should be available to them.

This discussion leads to questions around the ways in which looked after children are viewed in wider society and whether the findings of this study might be met with some surprise. Does society fail to provide these young people with the appropriate opportunities to put into action their ideas for serving the community? Could this failure be the result of society's low expectations of this population? The study has also highlighted the significant role that wider community activities and organisations, such as army cadet units, can play

in inspiring and encouraging young people's ideas for the future. Interestingly, the Army Cadet Force (2011) report that a survey of its members in 2010 indicated that being involved with the organisation had impacted their lives in a number of ways. These included the way in which it had increased their motivation to succeed in life (91% of respondents), provided them with a sense of community (89.5% of respondents) and allowed them to feel confident and state that the future looks promising (93.1% of respondents). This is just one example of the way in which services and opportunities provided within society can contribute to developing young people's sense of belonging in the community, self-efficacy and future orientation. The literature on youth civic engagement also expands on the understanding of how young people can become involved in local and national society, and stresses the importance of good relationships and good local community ties in this process (Lenzi, Vieno, Pastore & Santinello, 2013).

During the interviews, references were often made to films, television programmes and video games in relation to the origin of some of these young people's ideas for their futures. This highlights, once again, the accessibility and significant role that media and technology play in the lives of young people today. Certainly there seems to be increasing concern over the risks of children having a degree of unlimited access to the media (Villani, 2001), particularly for vulnerable young people (Lim, Basnyat, Vadrevu & Chan, 2013). This raises questions about the level of responsibility that the media have in monitoring the messages that they feed society's youth. However, from an alternative perspective, the communicative power of media offers the potential to be used in more positive ways. The development of young people's resilience and the ability to overcome adversity has been connected positively with role models (Werner, 1995). Therefore, further consideration

should be given to how the media of today can be best utilised to enhance opportunities for this population and promote ideas that inspire and encourage rather than disillusion and alienate. Educating young people in media literacy is proposed as an option for equipping youths with the necessary skills to appropriately respond to media messages (Salgado et al., 2012).

Photo Elicitation

Although the use of photographs in the study was not strictly in line with the traditional photo elicitation methodology, their presence in the interviews did serve the intended purpose. The photography task made participating in the study much more accessible to the young people and facilitated engagement during the interviews. Some participants engaged with the task in more detail than others and had clearly given a lot of thought to choosing which photographs to take and bring to the interview. The content and quality of the selected photographs varied greatly between the participants, from a pair of football boots to a weaponry assembly procedure. Several photographs were taken using the individuals' own cameras or mobile phones, highlighting the relevance and accessibility of this sort of technology in their lives (Marsh et al., 2005). In acknowledging media impact on young people, Common Sense Media (2013) propose that in order to make use of its positive potential a greater and more specific understanding of its role in young people's lives is needed. This suggests there is scope for wider use of methodologies such as photo elicitation in research with young people as understanding deepens. While the majority of the young people brought a wide selection of ideas to discuss, a number of the participants only brought two or three ideas, often focusing exclusively on their desired career or on a particular possession. Consequently, the researcher had to work much harder to invite them

to expand on ideas that weren't necessarily represented in the chosen photographs. Perhaps this was the result of some difficulty in imagining how to represent less concrete ideas through more abstract photographs. However, the photographs still provided a starting point from which to enter into a conversation about future aspirations and grounded the participants in the focus of the study.

Study Strengths and Limitations

Apart from the provision of age, there is a lack of background demographic information about the participants in the study. This was due to restrictions imposed by the research governance committee of the participating social services team. Further information (e.g. number of foster placements, duration of time in foster care) might have allowed further insight into the individuals' varying experiences and key factors that could have influenced the young people's responses during the interview process. However, this form of qualitative research intended to explore what the young people themselves put forward as important factors in the formation of their future aspirations rather than making presumptions from demographic information. Furthermore, asking the participants directly about such information may have had implications for their levels of comfort and stress during the interview.

The nature of qualitative research means that only a small sample of participants is required and no assumptions are made about generalisability (Willig, 2004), with a greater focus on understanding "the meaning of something for a given person" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29). It is therefore not possible or necessary to conclude whether the results represent the ideas of the majority of young people in care. Notably all participants were sampled from the same

area of the country and the possible consequent impact of cultural influences was not accounted for. Using a quantitative approach with a larger sample and the inclusion of a control group of young people not in looked after care might provide other helpful information to enable a useful comparison of themes across groups.

The exclusion criteria also influence the study's results. Of note was the exclusion of individuals in care with moderate to severe learning disabilities. This was due to concerns around the process of the study and potential distress regarding the content of the interview. Also, the format of the interview was not adapted to make it accessible to those of all abilities, for instance using visual aids and Makaton, and highlights an issue to be addressed in future research. This kind of study would require thoughtful planning and design and might also benefit from a systemic evaluation of carer views. Only those under a section 31 of the Children's Act (1989) and in foster care were included in the current study. This decision was made with the understanding that the experience of living in a foster placement might be very different to that of living in a children's home. Despite this methodological limitation, the exclusion criteria were applied in order to keep the data sample as homogeneous as possible to allow the examination of convergence and divergence within the sample (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The recruitment process may reflect selection bias. Due to the necessary protection of such a vulnerable population, potential participants were initially identified by their social workers, as required by the Research Ethics Committee. Possibly only individuals with an interest in photography or those more likely to engage in conversation with a researcher were, understandably, selected by social workers.

In two interviews a foster carer was present in the room or within hearing range of the conversation. This was at the request of the participants and it was deemed acceptable by the researcher in order to allow the young people to feel comfortable. However, the participants may have censored their responses to some degree as a result of not wishing to disclose a particular idea or opinion to their foster carer, particularly ideas of a personal or sensitive nature.

A key strength of the study was its qualitative approach and its commitment to ensuring the voices of these young people were heard. No presumptions were made about how this population would map onto the theoretical framework of future orientation which allowed for a purely exploratory approach from a point of curiosity.

Clinical Implications and Future Research

The findings of this study reveal the future aspirations of looked after children. In considering the themes evident across the different participants, it is interesting to reflect upon whether these are in fact any different to future orientations of young people who have grown up in their birth family. Quantitative research using samples from multiple populations would contribute to this arena. It could be argued that the sample's experience of being in the care system has in fact impacted on their ideas for the future in a positive and pro-social manner. Certainly the idea of giving something back to society was common to a number of participants as a result of their less positive experiences.

If indeed there are commonalities between the looked after and non looked after populations in their aspirations for the future at this stage in life, attention should be drawn

to the significant differences in their long term outcomes. Is there a process by which such aspirations are eroded through growing up in the care system? If the aspirations themselves are actually able to endure this process, then is it the case that barriers prevent them from becoming reality? More is being done to support young people as they leave care (Care Leaver Strategy, 2013). However, future research should evaluate the effectiveness of such support in relation to the personal aspirations of the individuals it is meant to help to ensure aspirations and ambitions are being met.

All of the young people involved in the study expressed their desire to work. This stands in sharp contrast to the figures that identify a large proportion of the unemployed population as having been through the care system (Stein & Wade, 2000). Once again, clarity on the barriers to these young people realising their hopes to work is needed. The ripple effect of this could be larger than expected, particularly when considering the relationship between employment and well being (Waddell & Burton, 2006). Furthermore, this study has identified the need to take advantage of the influence of significant adults in a variety of contexts and the media during a young person's time in the care system. There appear to be many unsung heroes in the young people's lives, without whom future planning could be severely restricted. More should be done to make use of community based projects and organisations that offer mentoring and befriending services to young people. This would complement the potentially beneficial impact that role models and positive identification with adults can present.

Conclusions

The study has highlighted some of the aspirations that young people in care have for their futures. It has also identified a variety of key factors that influence the formation of such ideas. The findings emphasise the significant role that the wider systems around the individual can play in facilitating the necessary development and opportunities for these aspirations to become a reality in the future lives of these young people. A qualitative study, aimed at hearing young people's voices, now suggests further avenues of research in future.

From the initial design of the study it was intended that participating in the research could in itself act as a form of intervention in the lives of this vulnerable population. Certainly the majority of participants expressed the enjoyment they had experienced in completing the photography task and were generally positive about the interview process as well. For some, the interview was the first time that they had thought about and really been asked in detail about their ideas for the future. It is hoped that this experience might positively encourage them to actively pursue their future aspirations.

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Part Three

Appendices

Word count: 10,267

Appendix A: Guidelines for Authors for Empirical and Review Papers

Children and Youth Services Review: Instructions to Authors

Introduction

Children and Youth Services Review (CYSR) is an interdisciplinary forum for critical scholarship regarding service programs for children and youth.

Types of Paper

The journal publishes full-length articles, current research and policy notes, and book reviews. There are no submission fees or page charges. Submissions will be reviewed by the editor, Duncan Lindsey.

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Preparation

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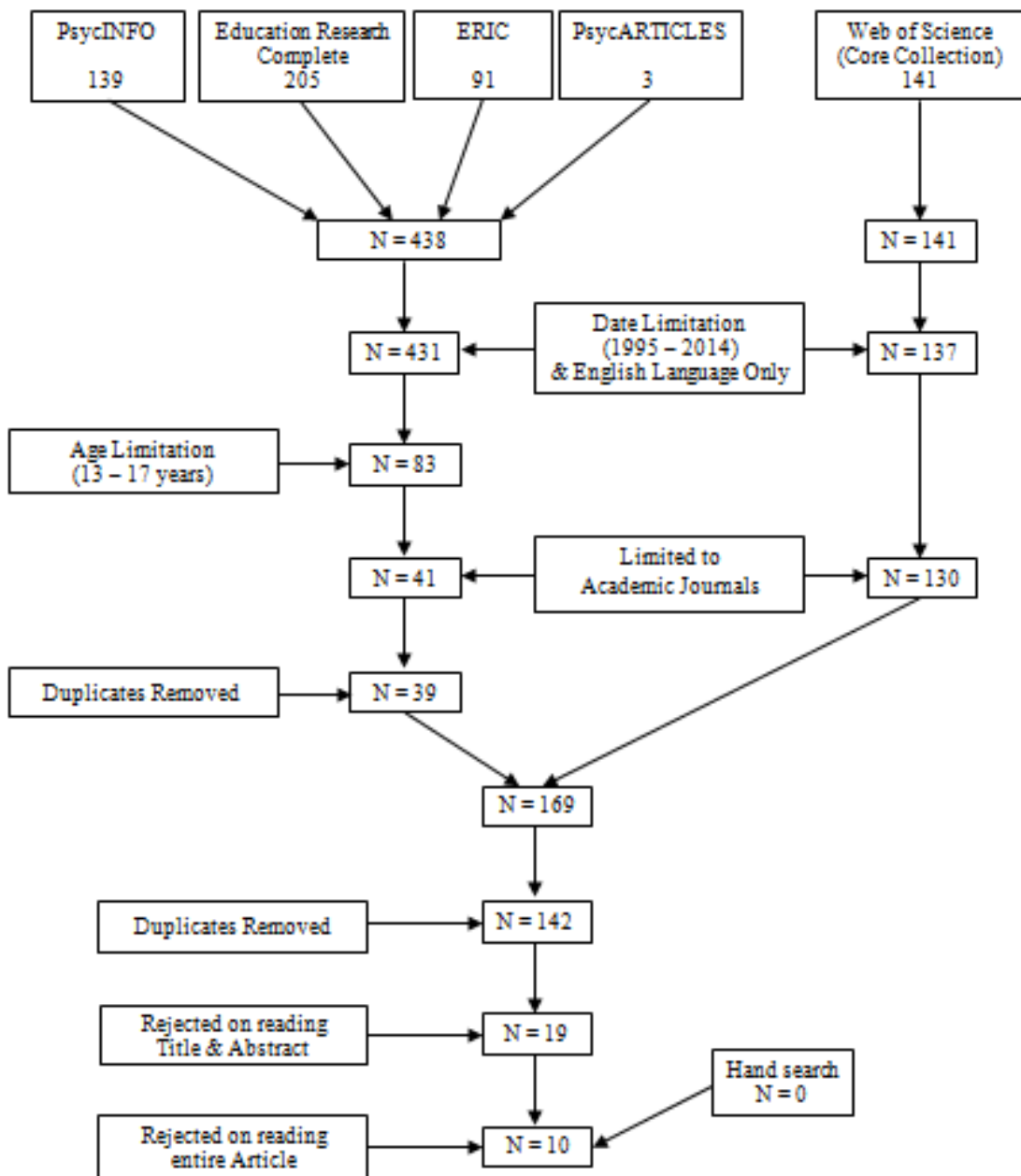
Formatting requirements

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Figures and tables embedded in text

Please ensure the figures and the tables included in the single file are placed next to the relevant text in the manuscript, rather than at the bottom or the top of the file.

Appendix B: Systematic Paper Selection Strategy



Appendix C: Study Quality Rating Measure

	Questions	YES	NO	Unable To Determine
1.	Is the hypothesis/aim/objective of the study clearly described?			
2.	Are the main outcomes to be measured clearly described in the Introduction or Methods section?			
3.	Are the characteristics of the participants included in the study clearly described?			
4.	Are the distributions of principal confounders in each group of subjects to be compared clearly described?			
5.	Are the main findings of the study clearly described?			
6.	Does the study provide estimates of the random variability in the data for the main outcomes?			
7.	Have actual probability values been reported (e.g. 0.035 rather than <0.05) for the main outcomes except where the probability value is less than 0.001?			
8.	Were the subjects asked to participate in the study representative of the entire population from which they were recruited?			
9.	Were those subjects who were prepared to participate representative of the entire population from which they were recruited?			
10.	Was a control group used?			
11.	Were the groups matched on demographic variables?			
12.	Were the statistical tests used to assess the main outcomes appropriate?			
13.	Were the main outcome measures used accurate (valid and reliable)?			
14.	Are limitations of the study discussed?			
Total Score:				

Appendix D: Quality Rating Scores of Selected Studies

Study	Quality Rating Score
Boyd et al (2011)	13 (92%)
da Silva et al (2004)	11 (78%)
Jugert et al (2013)	9 (64%)
Lenzi et al (2013)	11 (78%)
Mahatmya & Lohman (2012)	9 (64%)
Matthews et al (2010)	8 (57%)
Torney-Purta & Barber (2011)	9 (64%)
Warren & Wicks (2011)	11 (78%)
Youniss et al (2001)	9 (64%)
Zaff et al (2011)	12 (85%)

Appendix E: Information Email for Social Worker

Long-term Aspirations of Looked After Children

An Exploratory Study

My name is Sarah Banbury and I am a trainee clinical psychologist on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology course at the University of Hull. As part of my training I am conducting a research project looking at the thoughts and ideas that looked after children have about their future.

What is the study about?

This study aims to find out about *what ideas looked after children have for their future*. The study is particularly interested in how these ideas develop and what these children believe they need for these ideas to become reality.

Exploring these factors will increase understanding of the aspirations of children in care and will inform ideas of how professionals can best support and work with these young people.

Who can take part?

Young people aged 12-15 years in a foster placement who are on a care order under section 31 of the Children's Act (1989).

What will happen?

The study consists of two parts:

- 1) **Photography Task** – each participant will be given a digital camera to take photographs of things that represent their ideas for their future.

- 2) **Interview** – the participants will meet with the researcher to talk about the photographs they have taken.

Do you know any young people who you think would be suitable to take part in the study?

If you do and would like further information on the research, please contact me on:

Tel:****

Email:****

Many thanks.

**Sarah Banbury
(Trainee Clinical Psychologist)**

Appendix F: Social Worker Consent Form

Social Worker Consent Form

Participant ID:

Title of study: An exploration of the factors influencing the long-term aspirations of looked after children

Researcher: Sarah Banbury

Please read the statements below carefully and if you agree to them please complete your details in the spaces below.

Please initial the boxes

1. I confirm that social services hold parental responsibility for _____.
who is on a care order under section 31 of the Children's Act (1989). ☐
2. I confirm that I have read the information sheet about the above
research project and consent to _____ to participate in the study. ☐
3. I understand what the project is for and what it involves. ☐
4. I understand what is expected of me in participating in the project. ☐
5. I understand that participation in the project is voluntary
and that I can withdraw the involvement of all participants at anytime
for no reason. ☐
6. I understand that our participation, information about us and contact
details will be kept confidentially. ☐
7. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I had and confirm
I have had satisfactory replies to these. ☐
8. I have discussed the details of participating in the above study with
the child that social services hold parental responsibility for and their carer. ☐
9. I confirm that I have obtained the necessary consent from the
appropriate parties for _____ to participate in the above study. ☐

Name of Social Worker

Signature of Social Worker

Date

Contact telephone number

Name of researcher.....

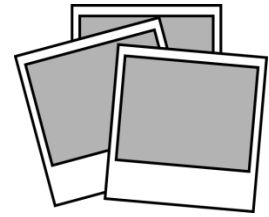
Signature of researcher

Date.....

If you have any queries please:

Phone me on **** or Email me on ****

Appendix G: Carer Information Summary Sheet



Information Summary Sheet

An exploration of the factors influencing the long-term aspirations of looked after children

What is the project?

- University of Hull Doctorate in Clinical Psychology research project
- Looking at what ideas looked after children have for their future
- Approval obtained from:
 - University of Hull Faculty of Health and Social Care Ethics Committee
 - Hull City Council Research Governance Committee

What will happen?

- We will arrange a first meeting with you and your child to explain the project
- If you and your child would like to participate the researcher will ask you both to sign consent forms
- The researcher will give your child a digital camera and some instructions for a photography task
- Your child will have 1-2 weeks to complete the photography task
- We will arrange a second meeting for the researcher to interview your child about the photographs he/she has taken

Key information:

- You are under no obligation to participate – you can withdraw at any point
- There is no cost involved in taking part in the project
- You can ask any questions at any point
- Hopefully your child will have fun doing the photography task
- Your child will be supported if they become upset at any point
- All information will be kept confidentially
- Confidentiality will only be broken if there are concerns of anyone being at risk
- The information from the interview will be analysed by the researcher – the results will be written up and submitted for publication

***Do you think you and your child would like to take part?
If so, please read the information on the following pages and feel free to ask
the researcher any questions you have about the project.***

Appendix H: Carer Information Sheet

Carer Participant Information Sheet

An exploration of the factors influencing the long-term aspirations of looked after children

My name is Sarah Banbury and I am a trainee clinical psychologist on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology course at the University of Hull. I am required to carry out research as part of my course. I have chosen to look at the thoughts and ideas that looked after children have about their future. As a carer for a looked after child, I would like to invite you to take part in the study.

Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. This information sheet gives you information about the research. Please read it carefully while deciding if you'd like to take part. If there is anything you are unsure about or you have any questions, please contact me using the details provided below. Please feel free to talk to other people about the research if you wish.

Part 1 – information about the study and what it involves

Part 2 – more detailed information about the research

Part 1

What is the study about?

This study aims to find out about what ideas looked after children have for their future. The study is particularly interested in how these ideas develop and what these children believe they need for these ideas to become reality.

Why am I being invited to take part?

You have been identified as a carer for a child aged between 12-15 years. Your consent is therefore being sought for this child to participate in the study.

Do I have to take part?

No, you are under no obligation to take part in this study and both you and your child must agree to take part. It is up to you whether or not you would like to participate. If you decide you would like to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw from the study at any point and you do not have to give a reason why. If you

or your child choose to withdraw from the study, in no way will this affect the support or access to services you or your child have.

What will happen if I take part?

If you decide to take part in the study, please contact the researcher using the details provided below. Alternatively, you can speak to your social worker and they will give your contact details to the researcher. The researcher will then contact you to arrange a first meeting that is convenient for you, her and the participating child. The first meeting can take place at a location that all involved would prefer.

At the first meeting, the researcher will explain in more detail what the research involves to you and your child. You and your child will then need to sign a consent form that states that you both agree to take part in the study. The researcher will then ask some questions about your child's care history, such as number and length of previous placements. She will then describe a task that she would like your child to complete in the following 1 or 2 weeks. This involves taking photographs of their ideas for the future, and the researcher will provide your child with a digital camera to use for the task. You and your child will also be given further opportunity to ask questions.

At the end of the first meeting, the researcher will arrange with you another time that is convenient for her to meet with your child to talk about the photographs they have taken. This interview will involve just your child and the researcher and is expected to last approximately one hour. The interview will involve your child talking about what photographs they have taken and why. They will also be asked additional questions about their ideas for their future.

Will it cost anything?

No, there is no cost involved in taking part in this study.

Will it benefit me or my child in any way?

There may not be any immediate benefit for you or your child in participating in the study. However, your child's contribution to the study will increase understanding of the aspirations of children in care and will inform ideas of how professionals can best support and work with these young people.

Are there any advantages?

Your child's participation and the ideas they present in the photographs and interview will help inform professionals about the ideas children in care have for their future. Some children may enjoy sharing their ideas and taking part in the photography task.

Are there any disadvantages?

It is possible that in talking about the photographs and ideas for the future, emotions and memories may be evoked. If this were to happen, suggestions would be made of people who may be able to provide further support.

If after reading the information in Part 1 you are still interested in taking part, please continue to read Part 2 for further details.

Part 2

Will my information be kept confidentially?

Yes, your participation in the study and all information about you and your child will be kept confidentially. Whilst direct quotes may be used from your child's interview, neither you nor your child will be identified. Information will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Hull. Only the researcher and other authorised persons (research supervisor) will have access to the information. Once the study has been completed, the information will be kept for 10 years before being destroyed.

Confidentiality may be broken, in line with current legislation, only if information is shared that raises concerns for the safety of you, your child or anyone else. If this happens, it will first be discussed with the social worker and an appropriate course of action decided.

What will happen with the results of the study?

The results will be collected and analysed by the researcher. She will then write up the results and submit them for publication in an appropriate professional journal. If you would like to find out about the results of the study once it has been completed, please contact the researcher on the details provided below and she will feed this back to you.

What if I change my mind?

You are free to change your mind and withdraw from the study at any point without giving a reason. This will not affect the support or services that you or your child receive.

What if there is a problem?

If at any point during the study you had any questions or concerns you could contact the researcher using the details that are provided below. The researcher will do her best to try to answer any questions you have.

Are there any risks in taking part in the study?

No risks have been identified for participants to take part in the study.

Has anyone reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Health and Social Care ethics committee at the University of Hull.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you have any further questions please contact me using the details below:

Sarah Banbury
Trainee Clinical Psychologist
Department of Clinical Psychology and Psychological Therapies
Hertford Building
University of Hull
Hull
HU6 7RX

Telephone: ****

Email: ****

Sources of support:

If you feel you need some support for yourself please contact your GP.

If you feel you need support for the child you care for please contact your social worker.

Appendix I: Participant Information Summary Sheet

Your Ideas For Your Future

“An exploration of the factors influencing the long-term aspirations of looked after children”

Hello, I’m Sarah Banbury.

I’m a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Hull. I am doing this research as part of my project.

Would you like to take part in my project?

It’s about what ideas you have for *your future* and if they’re important to you.

Photography Task:

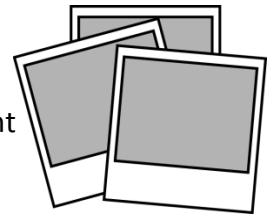
If you decide to take part in the project I will:

- Meet with you to explain the project in more detail
- Ask you to use a digital camera to do a special photography task
- Give you 1-2 weeks to take some photographs
- Meet with you again to talk to you about the photographs you have taken



Key Information:

- You do not have to take part – you can say you want to stop at any point
- You can ask any questions at any time
- What you say will be kept private
- The only time I will have to tell someone about you or what you have said is if I am worried that you or somebody else is not safe - I will tell you if I need to talk to someone
- I will write about what I find out – other people might want to read what I write
- I might talk to people who work with children in care to tell them about what I have found out
- If you are worried or upset about something while taking part in the project I will help you to find someone to talk to about this



Would you like to take part in this project?

If YES, please read the information on the next few pages

and ask me any questions you might have.

Appendix J: Participant Information Sheet

Your Ideas For Your Future

“An exploration of the factors influencing the long-term aspirations of looked after children”

Information Sheet

Hello, I’m Sarah. I’m a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Hull. I am doing this research as part of my project.

Would you like to take part in my study?

It’s about what ideas you have for your future.



Before you decide if you want to take part, have a look at the information on this sheet. This sheet will tell you what will happen in the study.

If there is anything that you are not sure about, you can ask your carer, or ask them to ring or send an email so you can speak to me.

What is this study about?

This study is trying to find out how to help children in care by finding out what ideas you have for your future and if they’re important to you. This is so that people who work with children know how best to help them.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is completely up to you to decide. If you decide that you would like to take part, you will need to sign a form to say that you would. Even if you say you would like to take part, you can quit at any time. If you decide that you would like to quit, you won’t get into any trouble and nobody will mind.

Can I ask questions before I decide?

Yes. Your carer or social worker has my email address and phone number so you can ask them to call or email me with your questions. You can talk to anyone you want to about the study if you are not sure.



What will happen if I take part?

If you would like to take part you will need to sign a form that says you want to take part in the project. After that, I will come to meet with you and your carer or social worker in a place that you feel comfortable. I will ask you and your carer or social worker a bit about you and your background. I will also tell you about a special task I would like you to do which involves taking some photographs. I will then give you a camera to take home with you for 1 or 2 weeks to do the task. I will also give you an information sheet with some instructions about what you should and shouldn't do for the task. When you have taken the photographs, we will meet again and I would like you to talk to me about the photographs you have taken.



I would like to know what ideas you have for your future. While we are talking, what we say to each other will be recorded on a machine called a dictaphone. This is so that later I can listen again and write down your ideas. Altogether, you will probably be talking to me for about 1 hour.

Will what I say be kept private?

Yes. Only you and your carer or social worker will know you are taking part in the study. I will make sure that only you and I know what you have talked about. Your carer or social worker doesn't have to know what you have said unless you want to tell them. I will use a special code on the dictaphone recording so only I know that it is yours. The codes will be kept in a locked cabinet so no one else will know which is your recording.



The only time I will have to tell someone about you or what you have said is if I am worried that you or somebody else is not safe. I will tell you if I need to talk to someone.

What will happen to the information Sarah collects?

I am going to write about what I find out. I might also talk to people who work with children in care to tell them about what I've found out. If you or your carers want to know about what I have found out I will tell you.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any worries or questions about the study, you can ask your carer or social worker to call or email, so you can speak to me.

When we are talking, if you tell me or show me something that makes me think that you or somebody else is upset or being harmed, then I will help you to find someone you can talk to about this.

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

Sarah Banbury

Appendix K: Participant Pseudonyms & Ages

Pseudonym	Age
Marcus	16
Jamie	15
Natalie	15
Leah	13
Lucy	13
Ethan	13
Evie	12

Appendix L: Carer Consent Form

Carer Consent Form

Participant ID :

Title of study: An exploration of the factors influencing the long-term aspirations of looked after children

Researcher: Sarah Banbury

Please read the statements below carefully and if you agree to them please complete your details in the spaces below.

Please initial the boxes

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 10. I confirm I have read the information sheet about the above research project and would like to participate in the study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. I understand what the project is for and what it involves. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. I understand that participation in the project is voluntary and that I can withdraw at anytime for no reason without it affecting my foster child's social support or legal rights. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. I understand that our participation, information about us and contact details will be kept confidentially. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I had and confirm I have had satisfactory replies to these. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. I have considered all of the information provided and would like to participate in the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. I have discussed the details of participating in the above study with my child. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of carer

Signature of carer

Date

Contact telephone number

Name of researcher.....

Signature of researcher

Date.....

If you have any queries please:

Phone me on **** or Email me on ****

When completed: 1 for participant; 1 for researcher site file.

Appendix M: Participant Assent Form

Assent Form

“An exploration of the factors influencing the long-term aspirations of looked after children”

Young person to circle their answer to each question:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| Has somebody else explained this project to you? | Yes/No |
| Do you understand what this project is about? | Yes/No |
| Have you asked all the questions you want? | Yes/No |
| Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand? | Yes/No |
| Do you understand it's ok to stop taking part at any time? | Yes/No |
| Are you happy to take part? | Yes/No |

If any answers are “no” or you have decided you don't want to take part, please don't sign your name.

If you do want to take part, please write your name on the line below.

Your Name: . _____.

Date: . _____.

The person who explained this project to you needs to sign as well:

Print Name: . _____.

Sign: . _____.

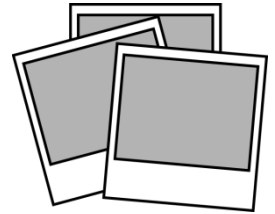
Date: . _____.

Thank you for your help.

Appendix N: Participant Instruction Sheet



Instructions Photo Task



What I need to do:

Take photographs of things that show *my ideas for my future*.

I have until _____ to take my photographs.

I can:

- Use the digital camera that Sarah has given me to take the photographs
- Get a person's permission first if I want to take a photograph of them or something that belongs to them
- Choose 10 of my photographs to show Sarah when we meet on _____.
- Bring the photographs to Sarah on the digital camera
- Decide to quit the task at any time
- Ask questions if I'm not sure about something

I must not:

- Take a photograph of anyone without their permission
- Take a photograph of something that belongs to someone else without their permission
- Take rude or inappropriate pictures
- Put my photographs on any social media sites (such as Facebook or Twitter) before meeting with Sarah



Sarah will:

- Meet with me on _____.
- Ask to look at the 10 photographs I have taken and brought to the meeting
- Ask me questions about my photographs
- Discuss with you what happens to the pictures after the interview
- Take a copy of the photographs to help her with the project
- Keep your photographs private

Appendix O: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Photographs

- Which photograph would you like to show me first?
- What is this photograph of?
- Why did you choose to take a photograph of this?
- How does this represent an idea for your future?

Motivational

- Why is this something that would be important for your future?
- Where did this idea for your future come from?
- Do you know anybody else who has/is/does this?

Behavioural

- Is being/having/doing this something that you think could become reality / actually happen?
- How could this happen?
- What would/could you do to make this happen?
- Would you need anybody to help you achieve this?
 - Who might that be?
 - What is it about them that would be helpful?
 - What could they do/offer?
- Have you ever thought about your future before?
 - o If yes:
 - What has made you start thinking about it?
 - Has anybody else ever asked you about it before? Who?

- If no:
 - Why do you think you've not thought about it before?
- How do you imagine your future might look?
- Where do you see yourself in the future?

Domain: Social Relations, Marriage, Family

- Do you imagine anybody else with you in your future?
 - Is there anybody that you know now that might be there in your future?
 - How would you keep these friendships/relationships over time?
- Would relationships with other people be something that is important to you in your future?
 - If yes: What makes relationships important for your future?
 - If no: Why do you think this is something that you might not need/want in your future?

Domain: Education, Work, Career

- Would you like / Do you think you will have a job in the future?
 - If yes:
 - What kind of job?
 - Why would you like to have this job?
 - What might you need / How would you get to being in this job?
 - Would you need any qualifications?
 - What do you think you'll need to get these qualifications?
 - Would you need anybody to help you? If so, who?

Appendix P: Participant Debrief Sheet

Thank you!

Thank you very much for taking part in my project.

I hope you have enjoyed it.



If you have any questions for me after you have left the interview, you can contact me using these details:



Telephone: ****

Email: ****



You can also call or email me if you are upset or worried about anything and I will help you to decide who else you might like to talk to.

You could also talk to:

- Your carer
- Your social worker
- Someone at Childline, by phoning 0800 1111 or visiting their website

www.childline.org.uk



Thank you.

Sarah

Appendix Q: Worked Example of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

With guidance from Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used as a methodological approach and applied to each interview transcript. An example of this process is provided below using a worked transcript extract from the interview that was conducted with Ethan. The sample of conversation was in relation to a photograph of a Lamborghini car that Ethan had taken to represent one of his ideas for his future. The separate steps to the procedure are outlined in the following sections.

1. Reading and Initial Note Taking

The transcription was read through in its entirety and initial notes made to highlight key points of interest.

Transcript		Initial Notes
Researcher:	Ok. So tell me a little bit about how this car would fit into your future then?	Family experience – connection to birth father
Ethan:	I've always wanted one. My dad has one.	
Researcher:	Does he?	
Ethan:	Yeh. Like that but a different colour...and since he's got one I've always wanted one...cos they look real nice	Family experience – connection to birth father Outward appearance
Researcher:	Ah right. So you'd like one of those then when you're older, to be able to drive around in?	
Ethan:	Yeh	
Researcher:	And how do you think you'd go about getting one? Do you think this is realistic...something that could actually happen for you?	Adult career choice Career provides access to money Money necessary to obtain possessions
Ethan:	Yeh...cos...I want to be a footballer when I'm older...and you get a load of money...so I know I might be able to get it	

2. Identifying Emergent Themes

The transcription and initial notes were reread and further notes were made identifying emergent themes. These summarised the ideas and concepts that were being put forward by Ethan in what he was saying.

Transcript		Initial Notes	Emergent Themes
Researcher:	Ok. So tell me a little bit about how this car would fit into your future then?		
Ethan:	I've always wanted one. My dad has one.	Family experience – connection to birth father	Creating something similar to past experiences
Researcher:	Does he?		
Ethan:	Yeh. Like that but a different colour...and since he's got one I've always wanted one...cos they look real nice	Family experience – connection to birth father Outward appearance	Creating something similar to past experiences Status and Appearance
Researcher:	Ah right. So you'd like one of those then when you're older, to be able to drive around in?		
Ethan:	Yeh		
Researcher:	And how do you think you'd go about getting one? Do you think this is realistic...something that could actually happen for you?		
Ethan:	Yeh...cos...I want to be a footballer when I'm older...and you get a load of money...so I know I might be able to get it	Adult career choice Career provides access to money Money necessary to obtain possessions	Stages to life and realising one's ideas Employment being pivotal to achieving aspirations

3. Identifying Sub-ordinate and Super-ordinate Themes

Following completion of the first two steps for all transcripts, the identified emergent themes were collated and a process of comparison between each was initiated. From these, emergent themes that were common to multiple transcripts and that were supported by relevant quotations were accepted. All others that did not meet these criteria were rejected. The supported themes were grouped and super-ordinate themes created. An example of this process in Ethan's transcript is provided below.

Transcript Quote	Sub-ordinate Theme	Super-ordinate Theme
"I've always wanted one. My dad has one"	Creating something similar to past experiences	The Past Influencing the Future
"cos they look real nice"	Status and Appearance	Personal Identity
"I want to be a footballer when I'm older"	Stages to life and realising one's ideas	A Process of Stages
"you get a load of money...so I know I might be able to get it"	Employment being pivotal to achieving aspirations	A Process of Stages

Appendix R: Epistemological Statement

In planning and conducting research it is important to give consideration to the epistemological standpoint of the researcher and its influence on the research process. This is in order to assess whether the methodological approach taken is appropriate and fits well with the researcher's stance, as well as the aims of the research. The relativist ontological position aligns itself with the idea that the world's existence cannot be viewed as independent from the individual's perception of it (Blaikie, 2007). As a psychologist I take the relativist ontological position, with a focus on exploring and understanding, and my approach to research is most in line with the anti-positivist belief that endeavours to understand individuals' interpretations of their personal experiences.

The aim of this study was to explore the future aspirations of looked after children and the factors that influence their formation. In addition, it was hoped that the research would allow the voices of these young people to be heard. Qualitative research focuses on the experiences of the individual and how they make sense of the world around them, with particular attention to the processes involved in this (Willig, 2004). As such, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate to meet the aims of the study due to the richness of data collection that it facilitates.

The guiding principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) presented the most sensitive method for handling the personal thoughts and opinions that were shared by the participants of this study. Its commitment to carefully examining the lived experience of the individual in a way that allows it to be expressed in its truest form (Smith, Flowers &

Larkin, 2009) facilitates a respectful approach that allowed the researcher to remain faithful to the ideas that the participants talked about.

IPA is underpinned by a number of key concepts that contribute to explaining the efficacy of its use in qualitative research such as this study. These are outlined below.

Phenomenology

Phenomenological research “emphasises first-person experience” (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 52) and strives to represent a view of the world from the perspective of the individual (Willig, 2004). Phenomenology posits that a person’s experience of the world, and the meanings they give this, should be considered in the context of personal and social relationships, in their presence or absence (Sarte, 1956/1943). This is particularly pertinent to the lived experiences of children in the looked after system with regards to the absence of contact with biological families.

Idiographic Mode of Enquiry

In IPA, this is represented through the process of analysing individual cases in great detail in an effort to understand “what the experience for *this* person is like and what sense *this* particular person is making of what is happening to them” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 3). This process stands in contrast to quantitative approaches that aim to be able to make generalisations (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The qualitative nature of this approach results in the rejection of using variables that are preconceived by the researcher as this would prevent the course of identifying the specifics of the participant’s personal process of sense-making (Willig, 2004). As such, this study did not provide any elaboration on what “ideas

for the future” might include in order to allow the participants to develop these independently of the researcher.

Hermeneutics

IPA requires the researcher to play an active role in the overall process through two stages of interpretation. This results in the double hermeneutic, whereby “the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world” (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 51).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the impact that the researcher has on the research process, requiring an acknowledgement of the inability to remain completely separate to the issues that are being explored (Willig, 2004). During the analysis and interpretation stages of this study the researcher reflected upon her position as someone who has grown up in the context of her birth family. In addition, she considered the difference in age and, in some cases, gender between her and the participants and how these factors might also have influenced her interpretation of the participants’ responses during the interviews. Reflexivity also considers the ways in which researchers are themselves changed through the process of conducting research. The researcher in this study was aware of how her own appreciation of family connections was deepened through hearing the personal stories of the young people taking part in the research. She has also acknowledged how a stronger interest in researching and developing ways in which vulnerable young people can be best supported by the systems and communities around them has emerged through this process.

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Appendix S: Reflective Statement

In completing this doctoral portfolio I have been challenged, encouraged and inspired at multiple points throughout the process. In this statement I hope to outline some of the issues I have reflected on during these three years and consider how they have impacted the work that I have carried out.

My original interest in finding out more about the experiences of young people in the looked after system came from observations of their, often seemingly predictable, patterns in life that were so different to those of young people who had grown up in the homes of their birth families. I had witnessed this in my personal life through friendships with people who had been through the care system as young children. Having grown up in the context of my own birth family, I developed a sense of wanting to gain some understanding of the perspectives of children with very different life experiences to my own. I was therefore curious about how looked after children think about their future, which is so often in the hands of the adults and professionals around them.

From this initial idea came a great deal of thinking around how these experiences might be captured from a research approach in a way that would be informed by theory and yet remain true to the lives of those who would be involved. Throughout my work on this research I have felt strongly that it is the voice of these young people that should be heard. I also felt it important that the process of investigating this area of interest should aim to uncover findings that would have some real practical value that could be applied to the services that work to support this population of young people.

Initially, it was a struggle to identify the terminology that accurately represented the concept of one's "ideas for the future". In searching the relevant literature it seemed that future "aspirations" and "goals" didn't quite capture what it was I was intending to understand. Eventually, I was directed to the theoretical framework of future orientation. This provided a specific model around which I could base my investigation.

In order to stay close to the aim of making these young people's voices heard, it was felt that the richness of data collection would be best represented through a qualitative approach. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was most appropriate for the purpose of this study due to its focus on gaining an understanding of an individual's experience of a particular phenomenon and their own personal interpretation of what that means to them. Furthermore, IPA's consideration of the context in which an individual exists was also particularly suitable for working with children in care as it provided the opportunity to gain insight into their unique personal experiences.

Through discussions with other professionals who work with looked after children, it became clear that there was some apprehension around how easy it would be to find young people within this population who might be willing to take part in research. While we, as professionals and researchers, could acknowledge the potential value that the study could offer, it was appreciated that the invitation to be interviewed by a stranger might not be so appealing to these young people. As such, techniques used in educational psychology research were considered. Through this process, photo elicitation methodology emerged as a concept that would be interesting and relatively innovative within clinical psychology and the looked after population. This appealed to me for a number of reasons. Firstly, in today's

world of ever advancing technology and increasing use of social media sites, taking and communicating through photographs is something that young people are becoming more and more familiar with. It was hoped that developing a photography task would therefore engage the young people in something that they would find interesting and creative.

Secondly, photographs would allow the participants a format in which to visually present ideas that they might otherwise have found difficult to articulate verbally. This format would make their ideas more accessible to both the participants and the researcher.

Furthermore, it would transform the researcher-participant relationship. Rather than the researcher coming to the interview with a set list of questions, ideas and expectations, this process put the participants in a more powerful position whereby they were able to share control over the direction and content of the interview through their decisions regarding which photographs to show the researcher. I personally felt much more comfortable with this approach as I believed it would better engage these young people in the process of research and make it a positive and, hopefully, enjoyable experience for them. In addition, the requirement to have two meetings with the participants (the first to introduce the photography task and provide a camera; the second to view the photographs and conduct the interview) allowed me the opportunity to build rapport with the individuals at the first meeting. Consequently, at the second (interview) meeting the participants already knew who I was and were able to feel more comfortable during the interview process.

The process of conducting the research study proved to be much more complicated on a practical level than I had expected. Unfortunately, the entire social services team for looked after children that I had intended to recruit from was going through a complete restructure

while I was planning and conducting this piece of research. As a consequence, I was faced with many delays with regard to obtaining initial confirmation of their approval and consent for the study to go ahead. This also resulted in difficulties in trying to maintain regular contact with the necessary social workers who were, understandably, extremely busy. These factors also complicated the process of liaising with both the foster carer's social worker as well as the participating child's social worker, who were often based in separate locations. Through this experience, however, I was able to reflect on the importance of establishing and maintaining positive working relationships between different disciplines. Much of the recruitment depended on the role of the field supervisor, who had a good relationship with the participating teams and the children involved, consulting with the relevant social workers around which young people they felt would be appropriate to take part in the research.

Meeting and speaking with the young people has been the most enjoyable part of this research study for me. I was grateful for their willingness to share their photographs and ideas with me and felt privileged to be able to witness the enthusiasm and passion that they expressed about particular issues. I was particularly struck by the maturity and other person centredness of some of the participants. I found myself noticing a sense of perceived normality in the ideas for the future that were being shared with me. This made me wonder whether this design of research might also be helpfully applied to conversations with other populations of vulnerable children (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers) who have been through significant experiences despite their youth and whose voices are not often heard within the systems they are involved with. I was also struck by the different relationships between the young people and their foster carers. Many of the foster carers were supportive

of the research project and expressed their belief that participating in it would be beneficial for the children in their care. In considering the role of these adults in supporting children in care with regard to their ideas for the future, both in their development and realisation, I also wondered whether future research might qualitatively explore the experiences of foster carers in this process. This might provide an insight into the lives of children in care from a different, but personally knowledgeable, perspective that could highlight further ideas on how best to support this vulnerable population.

The future orientation framework provided a useful structure around which I could organise my thinking and the findings of the study. While efforts were made not to lead the participants in their choice of photographs or the answers they gave to my questions during the interview, it is interesting to consider how the responses or interpretations through analysis might have been different if not informed by this framework. Although the future orientation framework covers a wide range of domains and concepts, it is possible that there might have been responses that would not have neatly mapped onto such a framework.

Following data collection, I embarked on transcribing each of the interviews. Although this was at times a tedious task, I found it extremely helpful for absorbing myself in the data and allowing me to really get a sense of themes that were common across the different participants. The analysis of the data using IPA was also a challenge at times. While there were many emergent themes throughout the interviews, I struggled with the process of only being able to report those that were apparent in multiple transcripts. I felt that this meant several meaningful and important themes that were only present in one individual's

transcript had to be excluded. This seemed to go against my original intention that the voices of these young people be heard.

The completion of this research will allow me to provide feedback to the teams of social workers that supported me throughout the recruitment stage. Through sharing with them the themes and findings of the study, it is hoped they might be given an alternative insight into the experiences of the young people they work with. Furthermore, this might spark thoughts and conversations around how they can better support looked after children in developing and realising their ideas for the future.

The process of deciding what to focus on for my systematic literature review took many different directions before choosing youth civic engagement. Initially, I had wanted to consider intervention programmes for engaging looked after children in schools but discovered this had already been reviewed. I then began to read through the literature on future orientation in order to assess whether a review specifically on its development in looked after children would be appropriate. However this identified the lack of research in this area. While reading around these subjects I came across the term civic engagement and started to investigate some of the research papers relating to this concept. Much of what I found reminded me of some of the comments the participants in my empirical study had made in relation to being involved in the community and the different leisure time activities or groups they belonged to. I therefore wanted to understand more about the factors that affect how a young person becomes connected with their local community as well as society at large. This would contribute to linking the consideration of future plans and

actualising them through action within the community. A systematic review of the models that outline some of the mechanisms by which this happens felt helpful and appropriate.

Despite the lack of data relating to civic engagement in the looked after population specifically, I had anticipated that in gaining a greater understanding of its development more generally it would be possible to consider how the particular experiences of the looked after population might differ and how this might impact on their own civic engagement. This seemed particularly relevant given the themes that had emerged relating to several of the individuals wanting to give something back to their communities. There is a sense that these young people have much to offer society, often as a result of their unique experiences.

The analysis of the selected papers highlighted a number of key influential factors and provided a theoretically grounded understanding of why these appear to be so significant. With the importance of peers, family and community connectedness being emphasised by many of the studies, the meaning this had for the looked after population became apparent. This allowed for much reflection on the different ways in which society as a whole can take responsibility at a local and national level to foster the engagement of young people in their communities. Several of the studies put forward suggestions for community based initiatives to be promoted and I would be interested to see what the future holds for involving looked after children in such programmes.

Several factors drove my decision to submit both of my papers to Children and Youth Services Review. Firstly, given the breadth of services and disciplines that were highlighted

as being involved in the lives of young people, both in my systematic literature review and my empirical paper, I wanted to ensure that the readership of the journal reflected this. It felt important that the information provided by these papers be accessible to multiple disciplines as their influence was evident in the research and the results carry implications for their direct work with young people. Secondly, the journal has an international focus. The systematic review particularly emphasised the need for cultural understanding and many of the studies provided suggestions of specific initiatives to help promote youth civic engagement. As such, it is acknowledged that countries across the world have much to contribute to this area of research and that much can be learnt from the sharing of findings and specific practices.

Through conducting this piece of research I feel I have learnt a great deal. Most importantly, is the gain that can be had from taking the time to talk with and listen to young people about topics that they are personally passionate about, without making presumptions beforehand. Furthermore, I have been struck by the breadth of valuable support that is offered to vulnerable populations of children. The research process has emphasised to me how this support can come in many forms, including state services, voluntary community organisations and people opening up their homes. The importance of research in developing and driving changes in society and services is also something that I have developed a deeper appreciation of. As such, I feel that it has been a privilege to have had a small role in contributing to the greater understanding of the young people in our communities that clearly have so much to offer us in return.