



**An Appreciative Inquiry: Multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting
the voice of young carers**

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Abbreviations

AI – Appreciative inquiry

ALN – Additional Learning Needs

CYP – Children and YP

EP – Educational Psychologist

EPS – Educational Psychology Service

DfE – Department of Education

EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan

FE – further Education

IPA – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

LA – Local Authority

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training

ONS – Office for National Statistics

PCP – Person Centred Planning

RTA – Reflexive Thematic Analysis

TA – Thematic Analysis

TEP – Trainee Educational Psychologist

UK – United Kingdom

YC – Young Carer

YP – Young Person

Summary

This thesis is comprised of three parts. A major literature review, an empirical paper, and a critical appraisal.

Part 1: Major literature review

Part 1 consists of a literature review which provides an overview of the national and local context of young caring, definitions and constructions of “young carer” (YC) followed by a summary of relevant policy and legislation. A general summary of the impact of caring is included.

The next section of the review provides a summary of the literature pertaining to identity. This will be followed by a review of prevalent themes in the literature relating to YCs’ experiences. Themes include educational settings: a “safe haven” or an “intrusive” experience; relationships with school staff; and social support. The final section offers a review relating to pupil voice and participatory research. It also outlines the role of the educational psychologist (EP) and the rationale for this thesis research.

Part 2: Empirical paper

The empirical paper aims to explore multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the views of YCs. A focus group was carried out with four participants from three professional groups. An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) approach was taken to explore constructions relating to the term YC; support services experiences of working with YCs and to consider possibilities for eliciting, representing, and promoting the voices of YCs.

Part 3: Critical appraisal

Due to the reflexive and reflective process taken throughout the thesis the critical appraisal is separated into two parts to demonstrate the development of the research, the researcher and of the contribution to knowledge as part of an iterative process. Part A provides a reflection on the inception of the research, axiology, and positioning of the researcher. This section sets the scene and illustrates the emergent nature of the thesis. Part B offers an appraisal of the research process including theoretical assumptions, methodology, recruitment, and data analysis. It also provides further reflections regarding contribution to knowledge and describes possibilities for dissemination.



**An Appreciative Inquiry: Multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the
voice of young carers.**

Part 1

Major Literature Review

Word Count: 10,695

1. Introduction

This research sought to gather multi-agency perspectives on social constructions regarding the term young carer (YC). It explores multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the views of YCs.

Much of the research with YCs to date tends to be with those who access support services (Choudhury and Williams, 2020). Moreover, YCs are frequently referred to in the extant literature as “invisible”, “hidden” or “hard to reach” (Kennan et al., 2012; Stamatopoulos, 2015). Williams (2016) reports that there are some CYP who want to share aspects of their life, while others may want to keep aspects of their life private. One YC in Williams’ (2016) research reported that there are some YCs who may want to talk about their experiences while others are “against talking about it” (p.54). This possibly raises questions such as,

- Who wants to be heard?
- How would they like their voices to be heard?
- How do we listen deeper?

It is argued that in seeking to listen to YCs, it is important to consider how the term YC has been constructed and consider how researchers and practitioners facilitate opportunities to represent and promote the voices of those who may be seldom heard.

1.1. Literature review process

An initial scope of the literature took place in November 2020, a further search was conducted in March 2021, this was then repeated in July 2021 and again at intervals to ensure that new research was reviewed and included where relevant. Significant changes to the research journey took place in February 2022, including adjustments to the methods of data collection, this led to a further scope of the literature.

Changes are discussed in Part 3 of the thesis.

It is important to note, limited peer reviewed articles and publications were available relating to YCs and the role of the educational psychologist (EP). The researcher therefore made the decision to include information from grey literature relevant to the topic for example, theses and unpublished articles to extend understanding in this area.

The literature review includes a summary of the extant literature regarding constructions surrounding the term YC, YCs' experiences and their participation in research. It also includes information about how their voices have been elicited, represented, and promoted. Relevant psychological theory is highlighted throughout.

1.2. Narrative Literature Review

A narrative literature review was chosen to gain an overview and impression of the research surrounding young carers (YC), their voice in research and their experiences. This approach was deemed appropriate as an initial literature search highlighted limited results relating to the area of interest. A narrative method was

therefore used to identify and summarise current publications and to consider what the current research tells us about YCs voice and their experiences. This enabled the researcher to explore gaps in the literature, to seek areas that have not yet been addressed (Ferrari, 2015), and to consider relevant underpinning psychological theory.

Narrative reviews have been critiqued for lack of clarity and detail (Bryman, 2016), therefore some approaches characteristically used in a systematic review were carried out such as a search strategy to provide transparency regarding the processes taken (Appendix A).

1.3. Databases and search terms

An iterative search of the literature was carried out using PsychINFO, Scopus, Medline, Proquest, Google Scholar, ORCA and government websites. Search terms included: young carer, participation, voice, experience, phenomenology, views and educational psychology. These terms were searched in varying combinations and a range of synonyms and terminology was used to extend the literature search (Appendix A).

1.4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Initially a search limit was stipulated, whereby papers from 2014 onward were included, this decision was made as specific legal rights and changes to UK law relating to protection and support for YCs took place in 2014. Changes included the Children and Families Act 2014, and the Care Act 2014 (Joseph et al., 2020) which may have had an impact on research specifically relating to YCs' experiences.

However, through a process of reference harvesting and searching cited reference lists, it was appropriate to include earlier papers due to the significance of the history relating to legislation surrounding YCs and in recognising that there has been an increase in research with YCs over the last 30 years (Aldridge, 2018). As a result, a wider scope of the literature took place which highlighted changes in constructions and representations surrounding YCs over time. Table 2 provides the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 1

Literature review inclusion and exclusion criteria

| Inclusion criteria | Exclusion criteria |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research undertaken with YCs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not include the search terms. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First person accounts of experiences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not include YCs as the target population. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included the stipulated search terms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were not written in English (if it was not possible to obtain a translation). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were published in the last 30 years. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-text paper was not available. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research which included YCs' 'voices' directly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary data source e.g. systematic literature reviews. |

2. Overview of the literature

The following review focuses on the current literature regarding children and young people (CYP) who are known as “YCs”. The review will be separated into distinct parts.

The first section provides an overview of definitions relating to YCs, the context of caring, legislation, policy, and practice. It aims to highlight the prevalence of YCs in the UK, the complexities involved in identifying YCs and the challenges this may bring when seeking to carry out research with YCs. This will be followed by a summary of the extant literature regarding constructions surrounding the term YC, YCs’ experiences and their participation in research. The next section of the review includes information about how YCs’ voices have been elicited, represented, and promoted. Wider literature surrounding “voice” and participation is included and relevant psychological theory is highlighted throughout.

2.1. National and local context

The 2011 census by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that there are approximately 177,918 YCs in the UK with the highest percentage of CYP undertaking caring responsibilities in Wales (ONS, 2011). However, the Children’s Society (2013) propose that the number of CYP with caring responsibilities is likely to be much higher and the recorded data may not be representative of the total population of YCs. Lloyd (2013) suggests it is possible that the census does not provide an accurate representation of the population because YCs may not self-declare their status if they do not identify or wish to be identified as a YC. Moreover, it is noted that the census is completed by a parent/guardian, and this may have an impact on

information recorded, for example, some parents may not identify their child as being a YC and some may not wish to share this information. It has also been suggested that varying definitions and a lack of clarity regarding what a caring role may encompass has potential to impact on whether CYP self-identify as a YC (Stenner, 2014). In addition, research highlights that some CYP have reported concerns relating to stigma associated with a caring role and a desire to maintain family loyalty and therefore they may not declare that they are in a caring role (Aldridge, 2018; Bolas et al., 2007; Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Stenner, 2014).

2.2. Who are Young Carers?

YCs are described as being CYP under the age of 18 years who provide care to a family member who has a disability, physical illness, mental health difficulties or difficulties surrounding the use of substances (Aldridge and Becker, 2003). Support for the care recipient can include personal care, cooking, cleaning, providing emotional support, managing, and administering medication, and looking after family members (Dearden and Becker, 2004). However, Rose and Cohen (2010) suggest that there are difficulties defining “YCs” and despite being recognised as a distinct group of CYP, each YC has diverse and different life experiences (Gough and Gulliford, 2020).

Rose and Cohen (2010) note that there has previously been debate about what constitutes a caring role, for example the extent of care provided and the age of the CYP. Warren (2007) suggests that although many CYP provide elements of support for their family there is a difference in the frequency and duration of care undertaken by YCs. Warren (2007) also discusses the level of emotional support

provided by YCs, proposing that there are possible factors which distinguish their caring role from other CYP in the general population. The Children and Families Act 2014 describe a YC as; “a person under the age of 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person of any age, except where care is provided for payment pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work” (Children and Families Act, 2014; Section 96). It is proposed that this legal definition is broader and does not place emphasis on the duration or frequency of care (Care Act, 2014).

2.3. Policy and legislation in the UK

The Care Act (2014) and the Children and Families Act (2014) describe YCs as being a vulnerable group of CYP due to their responsibilities and the potential impact of caring on their lives and their wellbeing. The Care Act (2014) brought about greater emphasis on professional responsibility to identify CYP who are caring and implemented the Young Carer Needs Assessment. This assessment must be carried out by the Local Authority (LA) if a CYP is thought to be providing unpaid care and requires support. Within the assessment the LA must determine whether it “is appropriate for the young person to continue to provide care for the person in question” (Children and Families Act, 2014; Section 96). The Care Act (2014) emphasises that the assessment is the responsibility of all professionals who are in contact with the CYP for example, social care, education providers and health services. However, the Care Act does not “specify which service or agency has designated responsibility for carrying out these assessments” (Choudhury and Williams, 2020, p.251). Moreover, Hawken et al. (2018) suggest that to be considered for an assessment the CYP and/or their family must have knowledge of

the assessment and the purpose of the assessment. As discussed above, families of CYP may not identify with the terms or definitions and some families may be concerned about outsiders becoming involved, or fear of stigma (Bolas et al., 2007). It is possible that this may have implications for support. For example, the Department for Education (DfE) (DfE, 2016) states that the result of the assessment should provide YCs and their families access to social care, health services and educational services to support their needs. However, education settings may not be aware of a CYP's caring responsibilities. Therefore, it is suggested that some YCs may not be receiving help and support as outlined in the assessment (Phelps, 2017).

It has been highlighted that there is variation when considering the profile of a YC. It is possible that this is related to individual experiences of caring, the complexity of the role, family composition, changing needs of the care recipient and differences in definitions. These factors are considered important in relation to the current thesis as research to date has predominantly taken place with YCs who access projects or support (Gough and Gulliford, 2020). This suggests that research may have a skew toward eliciting and responding to those who have been identified but may not be representative of those who have not. It may therefore be important to consider whether current definitions are representative of people's lived experiences and whether CYP feel that there is a need for their experiences to be defined by a specific term. For example, Joseph, et al. (2020) suggest that raising knowledge of terms used to describe YCs can be considered both beneficial and controversial. Benefits associated with awareness are said to include increased support, deployment of services and access to projects which may be valued by some CYP and their families. However, definitions may also be considered controversial as the cared for person

may feel that they have been placed in a position of dependence or have been pathologized (Joseph et al., 2020).

Joseph et al. (2020) suggest that discussions regarding definitions and terms to describe the caring role mirror similar discourse regarding “labels”. For example, Olsen (2000) suggests that the term YC can be considered “a social construction that has the potential to problematise childhood” (Joseph et al., 2020, p.82) and could have implications for how the cared for person is constructed.

There is also literature relating to socio-cultural theories and developmental psychology whereby constructions regarding YCs are considered to be against expectations of “normal” childhood, or what childhood “should be like” (Joseph et al., 2020). Choudhury (2017) argues that there may therefore be tension and debate between a children’s rights perspective and the adult disability perspective. For example, a CYP may not self-identify as a YC. They may view their caring role as part of their family relationship (Joseph et al., 2020) and therefore they may express agency over their lives through not disclosing some aspects of their world. However, it is contended that there is also a responsibility to ensure that appropriate support is provided for CYP and their families (Care Act, 2014). Moreover, it is argued that constructions regarding YCs and representations of childhood are typically based on cultural assumptions such as western views on childhood. However, research by Skovdal and Andreouli (2011) consider representations of childhood and caregiving whereby CYP “are active agents of community life” (Joseph et al., 2020, p.84).

For the purpose of this thesis, CYP in caring roles will be referred to as YCs and will be the central focus of the research. However, it is recognised that the term YC does

not refer to a homogeneous group and therefore it is important to account for each individuals' circumstances and life experiences, with a focus on hearing the voice of CYP who have caring responsibilities. This thesis also adopts a systemic perspective as proposed by Choudhury and Williams (2020) and recognises the interactions which occur between YCs and the systems around them. This will be discussed further in section 3.

2.4. Impact of caring

Through carrying out a search of the existing literature, there were accounts of potential challenges or negative outcomes associated with caring including, impact on CYP's wellbeing (Abraham et al., 2010; Acton and Carter, 2016; Cree, 2003), lower school attendance (Aldridge, 2002; Moore et al., 2009), YCs reporting increased worries and concerns (Cree, 2003), challenges relating to friendships and social withdrawal (Barry, 2011), bullying at school (Lloyd, 2013) and reduced educational attainment (The Children's Society, 2013; Warren, 2007). The Children's Society (2013) carried out a longitudinal study based on data from 15,000 CYP and found that YCs were more likely to have lower attainment at GCSE level. It was also noted that YCs and young adult carers between the ages of 16-19 were more likely, when compared to the national average, to be not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Similarly, Becker and Becker (2008) observed that there were a number of CYP in caring roles who left school at the age of 16 with no educational qualifications.

However, research has also sought to shift from a dominant discourse of "risk factors" and the removal of "risk" (Newman, 2002) to a strength-based perspective

(Gough and Gulliford, 2020) with a view to identifying positive effects of caring including resiliency and protective factors (Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Williams, 2016) and benefit finding (Cassidy and Giles, 2014).

The researcher takes the position that each YC has different life experiences and therefore wonders whether dominant discourses or representations which are pervasive in literature or reified in the media are representative of the CYP who may not have had their voices heard in research (Phelps, 2017). Although the current research has provided insightful information which has had an influence on support for YCs, it is argued that it is important to take a curious position when listening to the stories people tell and to consider the ways in which they may want to tell them. For example, Doutre et al. (2013) describes the importance of listening to an individual's life experiences as reported by the CYP, with a view to understanding what the caring role means to them as opposed to assuming experiences such as risk or challenge.

Thus far this thesis has presented information regarding the context and prevalence of YCs in the UK and has introduced some of the complexities regarding current definitions to describe CYP in caring roles. It is argued that constructions regarding YCs have the potential to influence how people act, the choices that are made and how society operates at a particular point in time. Literature and research surrounding YC identity will now be discussed.

3. Identity

A theme which appeared throughout the literature was the construction of identity (Cohen, 2010). McAdams (1993) describes identity as being a creative process which

can be regarded a struggle comprised of emerging or re-emerging stories which relate to a group or individual. Burr (2015) suggests that “identity is constructed out of the discourses culturally available to us and which we draw upon in our conversations with other people” (p.123). From this perspective, individuals piece together symbolic and cultural materials as a project which helps to construct a narrative of self-identity (Thompson, 1995). For example, a person may self-identify as a friend, a brother/sister, and as a YC. Schmitt (2003) proposed that people have many selves, and each position can be called upon depending on the context and social situation they find themselves in.

Bolas et al. (2007) explored the relationship between a CYP’s role as a carer and their wellbeing and used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) to explore and gather an understanding of the personal experiences of YCs. Bolas et al. (2007) found that some YCs separated their home and school life and one YC spoke about wanting to conceal parts of their identity depending on the context they were in. Other participants described the concept of “otherness” when referring to identity. Some participants were reported to fear judgment and therefore did not want aspects of their identity to be shared.

Skovdal and Andreouli (2011) carried out research on a resilience programme which took place in a camp in Kenya and found that YC resilience was increased through having a positive identity which was related to social recognition of the value of their role and their responsibility as a YC. The resilience programme was also reported to provide a sense of connectedness, social engagement, and respite. In a further research study by Andreouli et al. (2013), it was reported that YCs in Kenya were

portrayed positively by their community and that the YC role aligned with beliefs about childhood for example, the view that CYP are positive contributors to livelihoods. This construct was reported to give YCs a sense of positive meaning which was associated with the caregiving experience (Skovdal et al., 2009; Skovdal et al., 2011). These findings corroborate with wider literature, suggesting that resiliency is not something that belongs solely within individuals, it may also include systems such as, “relationships with competent caring adults, committed families, effective schools, and communities; opportunities to succeed and being nurtured by positive interactions” (Masten, 2015, p.29).

Williams (2016) found that participants wanted to “be treated like everyone else despite the difficulties they encountered” (p.52) and felt that raising awareness needed to take place with caution as some YCs raised concerns about knowledge of the caring role having the potential to separate or isolate them from peers. This was further reiterated when discussing “privacy and openness”, whereby participants spoke about a tension between wanting to share some aspects of their life while keeping other aspects private. Interestingly, findings purport that there are some YCs who may want to talk about their experiences while others are “really against it” (p.54). This poses an important consideration when thinking about YCs’ participation in research. For example, it could raise the question do people want to participate and if so, how do they want to participate?

Blake-Holmes (2020) reported that one YC spoke about keeping her parent’s mental health needs “hidden” with the parent not wanting to refer to her daughter as a YC.

This information echoes findings in the extant literature regarding the “hidden” nature of the caring role.

3.1. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological/Bioecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (2005) offers the theoretical perspective of the bio-ecological model which describes five nested systems of interaction between interrelationships and environmental systems. From this perspective it is possible to explore interactions which may take place through nested systems when considering the constructions surrounding the term YC and when considering listening to their voices. The model is described in Table 3.

Table 2

A description of Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Systems Theory in relation to YCs

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| The microsystem | The CYP’s immediate environment including their family, their friends, school and home. The microsystem may also include key adults such as a particular member of school staff, a YC project/support worker or a family member (Choudhury and Williams, 2020). |
| The mesosystem | The relationships between two or more interactions in the microsystem (Choudhury and Williams, 2020), for example communication which occurs between the child and their friends, or the school and home. The |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>mesosystem emphasises the influence of individuals on one another.</p> |
| <p>The exosystem</p> | <p>The wider systems around the CYP including the community in which they live and the services available. It may also include a parent/carers place of employment, the economic situation, extended family, Local Authority and Government services. The CYP is not necessarily directly involved but this system has an influence on them.</p> |
| <p>The macrosystem</p> | <p>This system emphasises cultural elements including existing social contexts and political discourses. For example, the discourses and social representations which exist relating to YCs. This has been highlighted above when discussing legislation such as the Children and Families Act (2014) which brought about changes for YCs, such as the need for assessment.</p> |
| <p>The chronosystem (process, person and time model)</p> | <p>The chronosystem was added in addition to Bronfenbrenner's earlier ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and consists of the time element in a CYPs life for example, significant life events, and considers cumulative experiences as well as sociohistorical factors. Changes to policy and legislation or the current context and implications of</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>the Covid-19 pandemic illustrate the abovementioned factors. The process, person and time model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) also places further emphasis on the role that an individual plays in their own development, which could include how their voices are heard and represented. This system recognises that although the nested systems around a CYP have an impact on their development, the CYP also has a role in their own development and it includes a person's motivators or resources (Tudge et al., 2009).</p> |
|--|---|

As discussed previously, literature highlights the interactions which take place between CYP and the systems around them. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (2005) can therefore be used as a theoretical lens which views the YC as an active agent who affects and is affected by systems in the socio-cultural environment. It is argued that the YC role and constructions surrounding the role extend beyond the individual (Choudhury and Williams, 2020).

It is noted in the literature that varying definitions are possibly a factor which could be contributing to the challenges associated with identifying CYP in caring roles. Many YCs may therefore be "out of sight" (Thomas et al., 2003) and this may have an impact on the how LA's, agencies, organisations and schools respond. Such as schools/services only being able to respond to the needs of those who have been identified. It is arguable that having a more informed understanding of caring

responsibilities could help to inform formulations regarding the CYP which could help to develop a more bespoke approach (Pickup, 2020). Smyth et al. (2011) provides different explanations regarding why some YCs are known to schools, LA's and services while others may not be. One suggestion is that in western society care is constructed as an adult role (Smyth et al., 2011). This indicates that cultural norms which exist within the macrosystem may influence how people construct their identity. Furthermore, it has been suggested that there has been experiences of stigma and some CYP and their families do not want the YC role to be identified (Smyth et al., 2011).

In addition, Kennan et al. (2012) propose that YCs and their families may "fear an invasion of privacy" or "drawing attention" (p. 276) with a possibility that children's services may become involved, and there may be a chance of family break up (Banks et al., 2002; Kennan et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2003). Moreover, as noted above, when considering YCs' experiences of education settings, some CYP have raised concerns that they may be bullied or identified as being different if their identity as a carer becomes known to others (McAndrew et al., 2012).

3.2. Summary

Thus far the thesis has outlined the national and local context and legislation regarding YCs. It has provided a summary of research relating to the impact of caring and a discussion regarding identity. The next section of the thesis aims to introduce research from the extant literature which has focused directly on obtaining the voice of YCs. Findings from the literature are grouped to represent "central organising concept(s) which capture the essence of what the theme [is] about [.] For example, a

pattern of meaning that tells the reader something about it” (Braun and Clarke, 2021 p.137). The purpose of the following review is to represent information regarding what YCs have been asked about and how they have been asked (methods). Following a general review of the literature, a critique will be offered. Green et al. (2006) note that some researchers may argue that a narrative review should include a critique of each research study, others propose that this may not be necessary. As such an overall critique is offered which takes an appreciative lens to define the topic of inquiry. The review intends to capture the essence of “what is known” in relation to young carers experiences, how their voices have been heard and represented to consider “the best of what is” and will then highlight possibilities for “what might be” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) for example, the scope of this research and the proposed research questions.

4. The experiences and views of Young Carers

4.1 Educational settings: a “safe haven” or an “intrusive” experience

Within existing research, participants referred to school as being a “safe haven” (Moore and McArthur, 2009) where there are possibilities to access enjoyable activities and supportive staff members (Gough and Gulliford, 2020). However, Skovdal et al. (2009) found that some YCs reported challenging school experiences. The study by Skovdal et al. (2009) explored how YCs cope with challenging circumstances with a focus on protective factors and resilience. Methods included a photovoice/draw and write technique which was followed by interviews and group discussions. YCs in this study reported that the caring role had interrupted their

education and although school could be considered a place of hope, in some cases it was also seen as a place of “judgement and exclusion”.

McAndrew et al. (2012) sought to explore the impact of the caring role on mental wellbeing using a participatory approach with YCs. The approach involved a World Café event where YCs discussed experiences and matters which were meaningful to their lives. In this study YCs presented to an audience of approximately 50 people including, social workers, voluntary organisations/agencies, and teachers/educators. Presentations were followed by a question-and-answer session. In this research, YCs shared instances of being bullied at school and raised issues regarding stigma. They emphasised the importance of needing their own individual support for practicalities including education and reported that school assemblies have the potential to raise awareness of YCs and “address issues of stigma” (McAndrew et al., 2012, p.17).

In contrast to experiences of bullying and stigma which were highlighted by McAndrew et al. (2012), Barry (2011) reported that YCs experienced school as a safe space for learning and meeting friends. However, some YCs did not want their education setting to have details of their caring role as it was felt this may result in preferential treatment.

Bjorgvinsdottir and Halldorsdottir (2014) researched experiences of YCs who care for a chronically ill parent with a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. They utilised a phenomenological approach aiming to view the participants as “truth telling individuals and fellow researchers of the lived experience” (p.40). The study sought to keep YC voice central and took an inductive approach. A purposive sample was recruited with the support of healthcare professionals and 11 YCs took part in the

research. In this study participants described the caring role as demanding and difficult and they also reported that professional support was limited. In addition, it was highlighted that YCs felt invisible, unacknowledged, and often felt that they were “left to manage at school” (p.43). Research findings constructed the caring role as being restricting, with participants reporting that they had many responsibilities which were considered to have an impact on their experiences of “childhood”.

Williams (2016) also researched educational experiences of YCs, with a focus on resilience, protective factors and risk factors associated with the school context.

Williams (2016) found that good friendships, a supportive person to talk to and opportunities to access extra-curricular activities were noted to be protective factors linked to school-based resilience (p.49). However, being disciplined for lateness or school absence, “emotional ties” such as worrying about the care recipient, and “practical issues” such as transport difficulties were also reported.

A theme that appeared pertinent and tightly associated with experiences of education was relationships. Barry (2011) reported that YCs often kept family, friends and community networks separate and participants described being torn between friends and home life. It was concluded that separating these relationships may lead to reduced social capital.

4.2. Relationships with staff in education settings

Thomas et al. (2003) carried out research in Wales with 21 YCs between the ages of 9-18 years. A two phased approach was chosen whereby focus groups were used to inform questions developed for individual interviews. Researchers also used a version of the ‘carer’s quality of life index’ (Williams et al., 1999) to consider the

positive and negative aspects of care giving as reported by participants. Some YCs reported that school staff had a lack of awareness or limited understanding of the caring role, while others reported that school staff were “too hard” or “too intrusive” (p.39). Relationships with education staff were also mentioned in research by Barry (2011) whereby YCs described their experiences of teachers being typically negative. Teachers who knew about the YC’s circumstances were described as supportive, but participants were wary about confiding in teachers because they lacked trust. However, one YC in research by Thomas et al. (2003) reported that they had a key member of staff who they could regularly contact and talk to which was considered beneficial.

Choudhury and Williams (2020) noted that participants in their study discussed the importance of consistency in contact with members of wellbeing staff, support workers and other YCs as a protective factor which promoted educational inclusion and supported psychological wellbeing. Findings highlighted the important role of a key person in school to support with positive school adjustment and to provide both psychological and emotional support to the CYP. Key adults were also reported to develop connections with families in order to recognise the wider needs of the family. The key adult was considered important in mediating concerns expressed by families. They were reported to have an active role in challenging stigma associated with the caring role. Choudhury and Williams (2020) suggest that it may be important to consider the role of the EP in providing support and training to key education staff. Collaboration with families has been highlighted in the Carers Action Plan (2018), which describes the role of the DfE in promoting the

identification of YCs and the need for a multi-agency approach to working with children and their families.

4.3. Social support

Research by Choudhury and Williams (2020) explored the eco-systemic factors impacting on the educational inclusion of YCs in the UK. They conducted semi-structured interviews with three YCs over the age of 16, three project workers, and two student welfare officers from LA schools. Findings suggested that support groups and YC projects mediated concerns relating to school and home life. YCs reported that supportive relationships developed with other YCs contributed to a sense of belonging therefore helping to negate experiences of isolation. It was also reported that the safe social space provided by YC projects and educational settings contributed to belonging needs whereby YCs felt they had space to “develop relationships and create communities where they felt included” (p.250).

Similarly, Barry (2011) reported that YC projects were experienced as a place for both practical and emotional support. Their research highlighted the significance of connectedness with people both within and outside the family home including support from outside services, peers, and school staff.

Nagl-Cupal and Prajo (2019) also found that a shared sense of belonging and community amongst YCs provides an opportunity to communicate with like-minded others, as there is a shared understanding of responsibility for a family member. In this study, 19 interviews took place with 11 YCs and eight parents to find out about experiences of a summer camp. The aim of the research was to gain an understanding about how families respond to available support systems. Research

findings indicated that YCs experienced a sense of belonging when they settled into the summer camp and described feeling “looked after”. Parents also shared that the camp provided an opportunity for their children to become independent of their caring role by taking a break from caregiving responsibilities. They reported that their children appeared happy, relaxed and more confident in maintaining contact with peers who attended the camp following their experience.

When drawing upon social psychology, it can be said that support groups are a key coping strategy for YCs and for their parents (Nagl-Cupal and Prajo, 2019; Choudhury and Williams, 2020). Individuals who share knowledge of the caring role through personal experience can provide someone to talk to, sympathy and support. YC projects and support groups could be considered a space to socialise with “sympathetic others”, Goffman (1963) describes this group as the “wise”. The “wise” are considered to be those who can offer a circle of lament where moral support can be received (Goffman, 1963).

However, Thomas et al. (2003) reported that although participants in their study felt that YC projects allowed for a space to feel valued and understood, many projects were thought to be under-resourced or over-burdened. YCs’ clubs were also described as a “poor substitution” for inclusion (Thomas et al., 2003). Similarly, Skovdal et al. (2009) explain that although community ethic is seen as a coping factor, it is not always available to all.

Moreover, a qualitative study was carried out by Blake-Holmes (2020) who researched YCs’ experiences during the lockdown period. Findings from the research included reports of reduced support when compared with pre-lockdown as services

were limited or were functioning differently. Participants described a lack of communication with services which was noted to have resulted in heightened levels of stress and burden on both the YC and the family. However, a limitation of this research identified and reported by Blake-Holmes (2020) was that interviews were not recorded and therefore interviews were not transcribed verbatim. Detailed notes were taken; however, it is proposed that this method may have lost rich, meaningful information and it could be argued that the researcher may have been subject to bias in relation to the information recorded.

A wealth of literature, to date has highlighted that community and social support, such as having positive pro-social relationships with peers and receiving support from key adults including extended family and support groups contribute to feelings of safety and are considered to be a protective factor for YCs (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Nagl-Cupal and Prajo, 2019).

4.4. Summary

A review of the literature has highlighted interconnecting factors between the nested systems around the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Moreover, findings from the abovementioned studies accord with humanistic psychology (Rogers 1959) such as the provision of safe, genuine and open environments which enable CYP to feel accepted and understood. In addition, experiences could be said to be associated with Maslow's hierarchy of need (1954) for example, the need for belonging and relationships, and to feel safe. It is noted that although some common themes have been highlighted, the extant literature had predominantly been carried out with

those who access support services. It is therefore proposed that there is a greater need to listen to and represent the views of YCs’.

5. Overview and critique

Thus far the paper has considered themes from a review of the literature (Appendix B). The following section will provide a critique of the methodological choices, highlighting the current contribution to knowledge (best of what is) and considerations for the current thesis (what might be).

5.1. Participants

The scope of the literature review purposefully aimed to include research which directly included YCs. In reviewing studies to date, a common challenge cited was difficulties accessing and recruiting YCs. Many researchers described YCs as being a “hidden” population (Doutre et al., 2013; Kennan et al., 2012; Smyth et al., 2012; Stamatopoulos, 2015).

All studies included in section 4 of the literature review recruited participants from YC projects, groups or organisations. It is argued that this has the potential to limit the research to those accessing support, potentially excluding the voices of those who do not access or are unable to access such services. Thomas et al. (2003) sought to recruit from the wider YC population including services that were not directly associated with supporting YCs. However, despite these efforts they were not successful. Given the diversity of findings, the present research seeks to establish how the caring role is constructed. It is argued that before deciding how to listen to YCs, it may first be important to consider how caring is conceptualised and understood.

Participatory research has sought to involve CYP, however it is possible that the methods or approaches used to reach out to CYP are not congruent with how all CYP want to be heard or understood (Phelps, 2017). Another consideration is that refusal can be considered a “voice” (Earnshaw, 2014) and therefore the researcher posits that it may be important to hold in mind the question, how do people want their voices to be heard and by whom?

Many of the studies also noted that due to the challenges accessing YCs, their sample sizes were relatively small. It is contended that generalisation was not the intended aim for many of the studies due to the methodological positions taken and that the research undertaken thus far has helped to shine a light on experiences of individuals who have shared their stories. However, it is suggested that there is further scope for research to add to representativeness of YCs and to the existing body of knowledge.

It could be argued that sample bias may have been an issue for most studies included in the review as recruitment was limited to particular areas/regions or from projects where YCs were receiving support. However, when reviewing the predominant themes collectively the findings help to tell a story about what YCs have said so far.

5.2. Data Collection

Individual interviews were selected for seven of the studies in the review (Appendix B). In some cases, interviews were used in combination with other methods, such as focus groups. Individual interviews are considered a strength as this method has potential to allow researchers to hear direct and first-person accounts (O’Reilly and

Dogra, 2017). Arguably, individual interviews can be considered a safe environment when there is potential for sensitive topics to be discussed (O'Reilly and Dogra, 2017). However, Lewis (2002), discusses the concept of power dynamics in interviews and suggests that a question-and-answer technique can attribute greater power to adults in conversations. Lewis (2002) suggests that it may not be possible to access CYPs' views perfectly, but there may be other "less overtly powerful" (p.113) means to listen.

The interviews in the studies were sometimes accompanied with other methods such as visual prompts and photo elicitation interviews (Doutre et al., 2013; Skovdal et al., 2009), a draw and write technique was also used by Skovdal et al. (2009). The researcher notes that these studies have made efforts to support the self-expression of YCs allowing the potential to learn something new and to attempt to view experiences through the eyes of the individuals who participated.

Five studies (Appendix B) invited participants to take part in focus groups and/or group discussions (Gough and Gulliford, 2020; McAndrew et al., 2012; Skovdal et al., 2009; Skovdal and Andreouli, 2011; Thomas et al., 2003). A positive aspect of the focus group is that it provides a forum in which YCs could share their experiences in a space with those who may have a shared understanding which is reported as a protective factor in the existing literature (Nagl-Cupal, 2019). However, there is potential that a focus group approach could risk some voices being represented more frequently than others due to factors such as the power dynamics at play, the questions proposed potentially being more relevant to one participant's experiences than another, or some participants feeling more comfortable than others to share

(Carey and Asbury, 2016). Carey and Smith (1994) also discussed the potential of conformity in the group which is referred to as “group think”, whereby members of the group may adjust behaviour “in response to their impressions of other group members” (MacDougall and Baum 1997, p.534).

However, a possible strength of the focus group approach taken by Thomas et al. (2003) is that participants were not asked about individual circumstances but were asked to draw around a volunteer and use the drawing to represent a YC.

Participants were asked to write about feelings, thoughts and worries in the third person. This was a process whereby the researchers supported YP to discuss constructions about the caring experience through externalising the YC position. The wish or worry box used in the group may have also helped to negate some of the critiques of focus groups. For example, those who are less confident to speak or voice thoughts aloud had an opportunity to add their voice through written feedback. Although the literature may have led to a multiplicity of views being shared regarding resiliency factors, it is proposed that there was potentially less time for each YC to share their story from their unique perspective (Smith, 2004).

McAndrew et al. (2012) drew on participatory methods of research through organising a World Cafe event. A strength of this study was the emphasis on YCs’ experiences, highlighting the role of the individual in sharing matters that are important to them. Presentations were developed by YCs and were delivered to those who wanted to hear about their experiences of mental health. Opportunities for YCs to discuss key areas from presentations took place. In the research four topics were selected for discussion following the presentation, this was a

collaborative process and specific areas were decided on to guide discussions and to create a focus. A strength of the study was the development of research projects where YCs were included as co-researchers. However, the researcher suggests that it may be important to reflect on the power dynamics of the groups. Four topics were decided upon, it would be interesting to gather further information regarding how they were selected and whether there were other topics that were considered interesting and valuable to some members of the group but were ultimately left unspoken. Similarly, to the critique relating to focus groups above, it is possible that when deciding on topic areas as a group, some voices may become more dominant than others.

5.3. Data analysis

Many studies in the extant literature have taken an approach to data analysis whereby a specific theoretical perspective was drawn upon, for example resilience (Skovdal and Andreouli, 2011 and Williams, 2016), protective factors (Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Williams, 2016), social capital (Barry, 2011), positive psychology and strength-based approaches. Research questions were developed to explore a specific area of YCs' experiences. This approach can be considered a strength with regard to evidence-based practice (Fox, 2002) and/or practice-based evidence (Barkham and Margison, 2007). It is posited that analysis is likely to have been determined by the lens taken by the researchers. While all research is subject to some predetermined knowledge or key areas which shape interest (Braun and Clarke, 2021), it could be argued that this approach also creates a barrier to hearing YCs talking about the

experiences that are important and meaningful to them and this may risk a loss of hearing valuable life stories.

Exceptions to this were studies which used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) or phenomenological approaches such as, Doutre et al. (2013), Bolas et al. (2007) and Bjorgvindisdottir and Halldorsdottir (2014). These studies took an inductive approach to understand lived experiences with YCs. For example, Doutre et al. (2013) invited participants to share visual productions to construct experiences. In addition, preliminary findings were discussed with participants allowing a space for co-construction. The researchers also reflected on the challenge of isolating the experience of caregiving when considering other elements of CYP's lives, including other aspects of their identity.

Bolas et al. (2007) also used an IPA approach; it is suggested that a strength of this research is the transparency of their approach as they included extracts from YCs to ensure that their voices were represented. This provides opportunities to read the research from the position of the researcher and gives an opportunity for the reader to develop their own constructions and interpretations. The researcher also shared preliminary themes for respondent checking and included a discussion on researcher positionality. It is proposed that a strength of this research is the transparency and coherence (Yardley, 2008).

5.4. Theoretical positions

As discussed, there has been a shift in literature overtime from problem saturated discourse to positive psychology or strength-based approaches (Gough and Gulliford,

2020). This approach may provide an insight into aspects of a life well lived despite challenges (Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman, 2000) including aspects of coping.

A strength of adopting this approach is that it reflects a theoretical shift from earlier studies which tended to focus on challenges and difficulties (Gough and Gulliford, 2020). However, caution may be necessary when adopting this approach, as although focusing on strengths can be a powerful method there is also potential to negate from the whole experience as presented by the CYP and could emphasise an overly optimistic account (Held, 2004).

5.5. Summary

Having engaged with some of the extant literature relating to YCs and their experiences, the researcher proposes that a common limitation which is frequently cited is the challenge associated with accessing YCs. However, it has been recognised that the extant literature has provided an insight into various approaches taken to listen to and represent the voices of YCs who have participated. The following section of the thesis provides further reflections on voice and participation leading into the rationale for the current thesis.

6. Reflections on the voice of the child

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) centralises the voice of CYP. Article 12 states that CYP have the right to express their views on all matters that affect them and they should be involved in decision making about their lives (United Nations, 1989). Legislation highlights that there is a need for provision to be based on the needs of the child, with their voice being central to

assessment and planning (White and Rae, 2016). In England the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (SEND CoP, 2015) requires that all CYP are involved in decision making around their future highlighting that participatory approaches should be central to practice. In Wales, the Additional Learning Needs Code (ALN Code, 2021) places emphasis on ensuring that the voice of the child and family are central and highlights the importance of collaborative working. Promoting participation and ensuring involvement is central the principles of equality, collaboration, and empowerment (Sanderson, 2002).

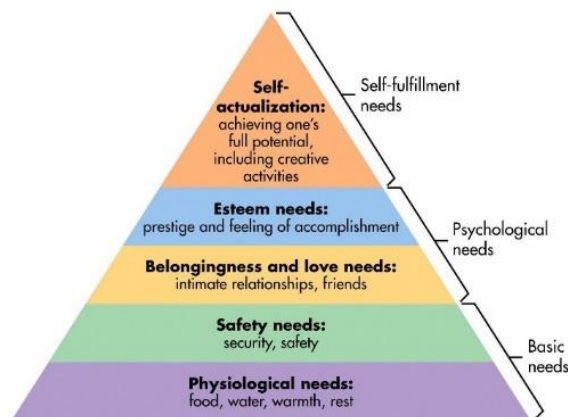
6.1. The benefits of listening to the views of CYP and theory

Research highlights that CYP benefit from choice and having opportunities to feel heard, understood and knowing that adults have worked collaboratively to integrate their views into action as far as possible (Smillie and Newton, 2020; Gersch et al., 2017 and Boswell et al., 2021). It is suggested that listening to children's views, taking their voice seriously and acting on views where it is possible can empower CYP (Gersch et al., 2017). It is possible that giving choices, representing and respecting views and translating voice to direct and specific action has potential to contribute to the development of competence (Deci and Ryan, 2012). In addition, paying attention to what is said and the process of working together through genuine collaboration can enhance relatedness. Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness are three needs highlighted in Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012). Moreover, Plummer (2007) proposes that participation and participatory approaches, can result in greater self-esteem and confidence.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954,1970) proposes that individuals reach their potential when their basic needs are met (self-actualisation). It is proposed that listening to CYP, promoting participation and engagement may accord with Maslow's hierarchy (see Figure 1). For example, Boswell (2021) suggests that having opportunities to meet with adults and having their voice heard can contribute to feelings of safety. Moreover, having views listened to, acted upon and represented has potential to contribute to esteem needs.

Figure 1

Illustration of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs



Note. Image retrieved from Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Simply Psychology. McLeod, 2022.

Arguably participatory research such as the research carried out by McAndrew et al. (2012) relates to belonging, connection, and esteem needs as CYP are able to share their views and feel listened to. Participatory approaches can create potential for CYP to have their views respected and to have opportunities to work with others.

Bradbury-Jones and Taylor (2015) suggest that seeking to gather CYPs' perspectives provides an opportunity to gather an "insider" view, which can potentially bring about a deeper discussion between the researcher and the participant. Similarly, Mannay (2013) proposes that participant directed productions create opportunities for individuals to share their own constructions through "limiting the propensity for participant accounts to be overshadowed by the enclosed, self-contained world of common understanding" (p.138). Adults are invited to take a step back from a position of "knowing", toward a position of hearing.

6.2. Young carer participation

Hardy and Hobbs (2017) define participation as a multi-layered concept used to describe "forms of social engagement, from joining in with your friend's conversation to being a member of a community group and much more" (p.174).

Participatory research is defined by Schratz and Walker (1995) as an approach which creates a space for voices to be heard and is characterised by aims to address power, such as,

- Paying attention to the stages in which CYP become involved in the process.
- The degree to which CYP are co-researchers.
- The amount of control and direction that the researcher and participant have in the research journey.
- The degree of shared decision making (Bagnoli and Clarke, 2010).

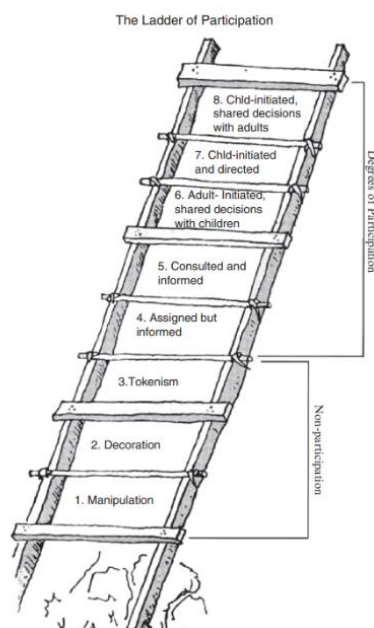
Participatory approaches arguably take a person-centred stance to research by recognising that participants are not passive recipients in the process but are active agents who have beliefs, values, and agency (Kennan et al., 2012). Hardy and Hobbs

(2017) suggest that models of participation can be understood as those considered hierarchical, dimensional or those that offer an explicit “rights basis” (p.176).

Hart’s (1992) “ladder of participation” as depicted in Figure 2 can be considered a hierarchical model and was one of the first structured theories relating to children’s participation. Hart (1992) proposed levels of participation where the lower rungs represent practice which does not include the YP or may be a tokenistic gesture. The upper rungs on the ladder involve meaningful participation and collaboration whereby voices are heard, represented and actioned through shared decision making.

Figure 2

Hart’s Ladder of Participation



Note. From *Stepping back from ‘The ladder’: Reflections on a model of participatory work with children*. In *Participation and learning* (p.22) by Hart 2008.

Hart (2008) later reflected that the highest rung on the ladder should not be considered optimal participation but instead CYP should be enabled and supported to engage at different levels with confidence. Hart (2008) suggests that individuals may seek to participate at different levels at different times. For example, CYP may not always want to initiate a project but should know that they can choose to (Hart, 2008). Moreover, it is noted that participation can be described as a process which enables individuals to “think for themselves as members of a larger community that includes adults and other children” (p. 30). Hart (2008) also notes that ladder metaphor has been typically used to describe adult and child interactions but can also be considered when referring to interactions between all people including “adults and children of different abilities” (Hart, 2005). In summary, it is suggested that the ladder can represent a view of participation however, there are many ways to consider how children engage in meaningful ways of participating (Hart, 2008).

The extant literature suggests that there has been an increase in research relating to YCs over the past 30 years, and research has increasingly sought to gain the views of YCs directly (Aldridge, 2018). Moreover, Phelps (2017) posits that there has been an increase in YC projects and organisations which have sought to provide means for YCs’ voices to be heard and represented. For example, the Children’s Society brought about the YCs’ festival in partnership with the YMCA to develop policy and practice (Phelps, 2017). The festival is organised for 11-16 year olds and includes a range of activities, some of which include political forums such as the “Voice Zone”, where participatory and consultative activities take place, including workshops. Activities in

the “Voice Zone” can involve discussions with professionals, MPs and commissioners and a “question time” style event is aired on the radio channel YCFM. In addition, YCs have been supported to create podcasts and blogs (Phelps, 2017).

Furthermore, the national YC forum was established and run by The Carers Trust and the Children’s Society to provide further opportunities for YCs to feel heard and represented and to raise awareness of YCs. The aim of the project is to increase LA capacity to support and run their own local forums (Phelps, 2017).

Although research suggests that there has been a move to hear and represent the views of YCs, Gersh et al. (2017) propose that listening cannot be considered “value free” (p.41). Phelps (2017) describes the need to ensure that CYP are aware of their right not to disclose or share information that they may not feel comfortable with. It is important that expectations are clear and that CYP are made aware of how their voice will be shared and who will have access to this information.

6.3. Whose voice is heard?

Arguably there has been a rise in practice which places emphasis on capturing the views of YCs directly. Literature highlights that there is a growing body of research with YCs who access projects or groups. However, a question proposed is “whose voice is being spoken and, simultaneously, whose voice is being heard?” (Mannay, 2016, p.6). Literature continues to refer to some YCs as “hard to reach” or as a “hidden population” (Doutre et al. 2013; Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Kennan et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2003). However, Cremin et al. (2004) propose that efforts should be taken to reach populations who are considered “hard to reach” (Kennan et

al., 2012). Moreover, Phelps (2017) talks about the importance of ensuring that “one voice does not eclipse others” (p.19).

Begum (2005) posits that the term “hard-to-reach” implies that individuals are of their own volition difficult to engage. It is suggested that this term may fail to acknowledge the diversity which exists in groups and the factors which may impact or influence engagement (Begum, 2005). For the purpose of this research the term “seldom heard” is preferred. However, it is important to note, that the term seldom heard is complex and does not refer to a homogenous group. The term has been chosen to describe CYP with different life experiences whose voices are less represented in research, or in participatory activities. Hopper (2010) suggests that there are many reasons why some CYP are represented more than others in research for example,

- Some CYP may not have the confidence to become involved.
- Some may not have been identified.
- They may not know how to become involved.
- They may choose not to be involved.
- They may have been over consulted (consultation fatigue).
- They may experience challenges accessing services which invite them to participate.

In addition, Kennan et al. (2012) discuss the important role of the gatekeeper and propose that negotiation can include access or refusal to groups depending on perceptions of the best interests of the CYP and their family. Although ethical approval may be granted for research to take place, the gatekeeper has a responsibility to decide whether the research is deemed appropriate. Further

reflections on the roles and responsibilities of gatekeepers and their role in supporting children's right to expression are discussed in Part 3 of the thesis.

It may also be important to consider the power relationships which exist between adults and CYP. Earnshaw (2014) suggests that although CYP may have opportunities to share their voices, it can be argued that CYP do not always have a choice with regard to who is representing them. This is possibly something to consider when reflecting on the terms "hidden" or "hard to reach". For example, who is seeking to hear the views of the YC? Are these the people that YCs feel comfortable or willing to share their views with? Gersch et al. (2017) suggest that "overall, the atmosphere and relationship must be appropriate and safe if children are to speak freely and in a truly free and open way" (p.4).

Also, important to note, Robinson and Taylor (2007) suggest that the concept of "voice" can encompass more than words that are spoken, for example, additional communication and that which is left unsaid. Similarly, Earnshaw (2014) suggests that refusal can be considered a voice shared, as refusal invites adults to consider their ability to change, reminding them to take a step back, to consider their expectations and to invite them to consider different approaches and possibilities. Moreover, Brackertz (2007) proposes that in order to listen to what CYP have to say, the participation method and the "issue" must be consulted upon with CYP.

7. Research rationale and relevance to Educational Psychologists

There is limited research relating to the role of the EP and their involvement with YCs. A search of the literature identified three peer reviewed journal articles by EPs (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Doutre et al., 2013; Gough and Gulliford, 2020).

Although EPs may not be asked to work individually with YCs specifically because they are YCs, they may become involved for various reasons (Gough and Gulliford, 2020).

EPs have a key role in listening, hearing and representing the views of CYP (Hardy and Hobbs, 2017). In addition, they have a role in supporting adults to find ways to ascertain and listen to their voices and in ensuring that these voices are heard (Boswell et al., 2021; Gersch et al., 2017; Smillie and Newton, 2020). Legislation highlights the importance of CYP being at the heart of assessment, ensuring that they have agency and choice over matters that are important to them (White and Rae, 2016). Research proposes that there are a variety of approaches that enable EPs to listen to the voices of CYP (Harding and Atkinson, 2009), and that YCs have shown that where opportunities for meaningful engagement occur, they have valuable information and contributions to share.

However, much of the extant literature including YCs tends to be with those accessing support services and projects. It has been argued that this may skew findings as the experiences of some YCs may not be representative of the wider population (Williams, 2016). When exploring cited limitations in the extant literature, it was recognised that papers appear to frequently refer to YCs as a “hidden”, “invisible” or “hard to reach” population (Kennan et al., 2012). It is argued that it is possible that there are some YCs who may be “seldom heard” and that gaining the views of CYP is an interactional process. For example, it is noted in the extant literature that there are factors such as, safeguarding, family concerns regarding services and stigma, which could be perceived as barriers to participation.

Findings from Boswell et al. (2021) on co-production with CYP suggest that there is a need to work with “wide enough groups to get a better representation” as opposed to working with a “few people with strong ideas” (p.6) and it is proposed that EPs are well placed to promote such practice.

The researcher does not seek to make claims about why some YCs may be represented more than others in research but is interested in the existing practice which has been developed in relation to the participation of YCs. Research seeks to discover current practice to listen to and represent their views. It also seeks to address possibilities which could be deliberated and developed further to consider the following questions,

- Who wants to be heard?
- How would people like their voices to be heard?
- How do we develop deeper listening? (Gersch et al., 2017).

It is argued that it may first be important to consider how the YC role has been constructed. EPs have a role in engaging with CYP, promoting inclusion, and reducing barriers to meaningful participation and possible power imbalances (Fox, 2015). This may be through direct involvement with the CYP and can also be through working with other significant people and organisations in the CYPs life (Fox, 2015).

Moreover, Joseph et al. (2021) suggests that “research must come from all disciplinary corners so that we do not lose sight of the social and cultural process at the expense of psychologizing young caring with concepts of coping and resilience, and vice versa, we must not lose sight of the psychological” (p.87).

7.1. Appreciative Inquiry

Having identified that there are existing contributions to knowledge relating to the voice of the YC through a review of the existing research and in connection with the move toward strength-based approaches (Doutre et al., 2013) this thesis adopts an approach informed by Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). AI is described as an approach which looks for “the best in people or the world and stating the strengths, successes and potential, both past and present” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, p.9) while also being open to the discovery of possibilities (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005).

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) emphasise the importance of language and include definitions for “appreciate” and “inquire” which can be seen in Table 3,

Table 3

Definitions for appreciate and inquire

| |
|--|
| Ap-pre'ci-ate, v., 1. Valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems. 2. To increase in value, e.g., the economy has appreciated in value. |
| In-quire', v., 1. The act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: discover, search, systematically explore, and study. |

Note. From Appreciative inquiry: A positive revolution in change (p.7) by Cooperrider et al. 2005.

Appreciative Inquiry emphasises five principles as being fundamental to the theoretical positioning, which are depicted in Table 4. These principles were deemed to be congruent with the position of the current thesis and the aims of the research.

Table 4

Five core principles of AI

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. The constructionist principle</p> | <p>What is known and the destiny of the organisation are interwoven with language being a powerful creator of the possible.</p> |
| <p>2. The principle of simultaneity</p> | <p>Reality is an evolving social construction. Inquiry and change are deemed to occur simultaneously – inquiry is viewed as an intervention e.g., asking questions brings about change.</p> |
| <p>3. The poetic principle</p> | <p>The metaphor of an open book is used to describe a story which is being co-constructed and co-authored by those interacting with it. There are continued and endless possibilities</p> |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 4. The anticipator principle | Positive images of the future guide positive action. The discourse which shapes a collective image can result in changes. |
| 5. The positive principle | Positive questions are thought to bring about greater effort for long lasting and successful change. |

Note. *From Appreciative inquiry: A positive revolution in change (p.8) by Cooperrider and Whitney 2005.*

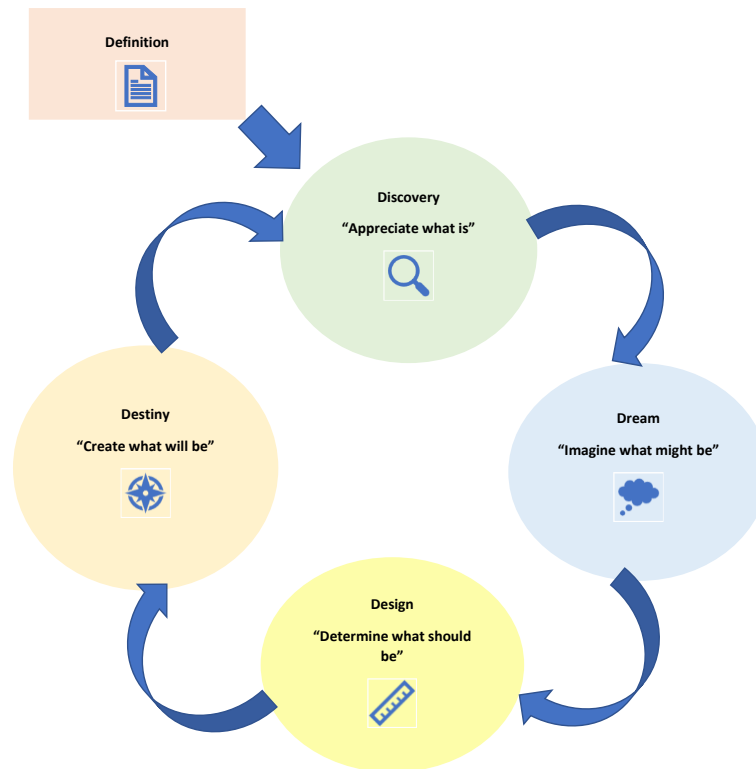
It is proposed that an AI approach may provide opportunities to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the practices currently taken by stakeholders to hear and represent YC voice including those who may be considered “seldom heard”, with a view to exploring possibilities for listening to and representing the views of YCs in research and in practice in the future. These aims accord with the 5D cycle of AI (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) as illustrated in Figure 3. The stages include,

- Definition: defining the focus of the inquiry and developing a shared understanding.
- Discovery: exploring “the best of what has been and what is”, through articulating strengths, best practice and sharing success stories.
- Dream: A vision of “what might be”, a “positive and potential” future.
- Design: possible propositions for the ideal and what “should be”. Collaboratively co-constructing actions to formulate a plan.
- Destiny: building hope and implementing actions for positive change.

(Morris and Atkinson, 2018).

Figure 3

An Illustration of the Appreciative Inquiry 5D-Cycle



Note. *adapted from Appreciative inquiry: A positive revolution in change (p.5) by Cooperrider et al. 2005.*

Due to the constraints relating to the thesis (further discussed in Part 3), the present research will focus predominantly on the “Discovery” and “Dream” elements of the 5-D cycle. It is hoped that this research will help a range of professionals working with YCs to evaluate practice at an individual and systemic level, to take a “step back” to reflect on “the best of what is”, with a view to looking at “what might be”.

8. Research Questions

This research seeks to capture the “best of what is” with a view to looking forward to “what might be” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). As discussed throughout the literature review, YCs are frequently referred to as “hidden”, “invisible” or “hard to reach” and it has been noted that there is a call for further research to enable dialogue and to increase opportunities for participatory research (Joseph et al, 2020) with a view to reach those who may be considered “seldom heard” and to become more responsive in order to “hear” and represent CYP. However, from existing research there is not a clear consensus on how we do this. The current research therefore aims to consider practice that has worked well to date when capturing the views of CYP, to consider how this could be developed further. This research seeks to look outward by exploring what is working well from the position of “professionals” who have experiences of hearing and listening to the views of YCs, with a view to considering what this means for participation and representation. It is hoped that the approach will allow for an insight into the interactions which span between different nested layers of the system around YCs (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The following research questions have therefore been developed,

- How are YCs constructed by support services?
- What are support services experiences of listening to and hearing the voices of YCs?

This is in keeping with the “Discovery” stage of AI. Reflecting on the positive aspects of existing practice in establishing and promoting YCs voices.

- How could support services understand, represent and promote the views of YCs?

This question is centred in the “Dream” stage, envisioning a potential future for understanding, representing, and promoting the views of YCs.

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**An Appreciative Inquiry: Multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the
voice of Young Carers**

Part 2

Empirical paper

Word Count: 9,793

1. Abstract

Staff members from UK secondary schools, further education (FE) settings, young carer (YC) projects and educational psychologists were invited to take part in a focus group, informed by Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). This approach was taken to explore how young carers (YCs) are constructed by support services. It also sought to explore existing practices around listening to the voices of YCs with a view to consider future possibilities for listening to and representing the views of YCs (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005).

In this thesis four participants took part in a focus group and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke, 2021a) was used to analyse the data.

The following overarching themes are discussed: Language and identity; Voice does not occur in a vacuum – a community around the family; The everyday magic – welcoming environments and approachable people.

Tentative implications for practice are offered including considerations for listening to and representing the voices of YCs and the role of the educational psychologist (EP). Possibilities for future research are highlighted.

2. Summary of the literature

2.1. Young carers, prevalence, and context

In 2011 the census by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that there are approximately 177,918 YCs in the UK (ONS, 2011). However, the Children's Society (2013) propose that the number of YCs is likely to be much higher. It has been suggested that the recorded data may not be representative of the total population of YCs due to numerous factors. These factors include, varying definitions of the term YC, whether the child or young person (CYP) self-identifies as being a YC and possible concerns surrounding stigma and family loyalty (Aldridge, 2018; Bolas et al., 2007; Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Joseph et al. 2020; Stenner, 2014).

2.2. Who are young carers?

YCs are CYP who provide care to a relative who may have a disability, physical illness, difficulties relating to mental health or difficulties surrounding the use of substances (Aldridge and Becker, 2003). Support for the care recipient can include, personal care, cooking, cleaning, emotional support, managing and administering medication, and looking after other family members (Dearden and Becker, 2004).

Research suggests that there are varying terms and definitions used to describe YCs (Joseph et al., 2020). The Children and Families Act 2014 describe a YC as "a person under the age of 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person of any age, except where care is provided for payment pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work" (Children and Families Act, 2014; Section 96).

2.3. Policy and legislation in the UK

The Children and Families Act (2014) and the Care Act (2014) saw the introduction of greater responsibility on Local Authorities (LAs) to identify and support YCs through the implementation of the YC Needs Assessment. This assessment must be carried out by the LA if a CYP is thought to be providing unpaid care and requires support. Within the assessment the LA must determine whether it “is appropriate for the young person to continue to provide care for the person in question” (Children and Families Act, 2014; Section 96). However, legislation does not specify which service has responsibility for carrying out the assessment (Choudhury and Williams, 2020). As discussed, a number of YCs are not known to support services and services may not be aware of the CYP’s caring responsibilities. Therefore, it is possible that some YCs may not be receiving help and support as outlined by the Care Act 2014 (Phelps, 2017).

2.4. Impact of caring

YCs are a heterogeneous group of CYP who within literature have been identified as being vulnerable and at-risk (Becker and Becker, 2008; Dearden and Becker, 2004). Through carrying out a search of the existing literature, there were accounts of potential challenges or negative outcomes associated with caring including: impact on CYP’s wellbeing (Abraham et al., 2010; Acton and Carter, 2016; Cree, 2003), lower school attendance (Aldridge, 2002; Moore et al., 2009), YCs’ reporting increased worries and concerns (Cree, 2003), challenges relating to friendships and social withdrawal (Barry, 2011), bullying at school (Lloyd, 2013) and reduced educational attainment (Warren, 2007; The Children’s Society, 2013).

However, research has sought to shift from a dominant discourse of “risk” (Newman, 2002) to strength-based perspectives (Gough and Gulliford, 2020) with a view to identifying positive effects of caring including, resiliency, protective factors (Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Williams, 2016) and benefit finding (Cassidy and Giles, 2014).

YCs are not a homogenous group (Gough and Guliford, 2020) and each CYP has different life experiences. Doutré et al. (2013) highlights the importance of listening an individual regarding their lived experiences as opposed to assuming risk or challenge. It is argued that it is important to take a curious position when listening to the stories people tell and to consider the ways in which they may want to tell them.

2.5. Reflections on the voice and participation of young carers

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989) centralises the voice of CYP. Article 12 states that CYP have the right to express their views on all matters that affect them and they should be involved in decision making about their lives (United Nations, 1989). Legislation highlights that there is a need for provision to be based on the needs of the child with their voice being central to assessment and planning (White and Rae, 2016). Moreover, participatory research takes the view that CYP are competent social actors who should be actively involved in shaping and co-constructing their world (Gray and Winter, 2011).

It is possible that giving choices, representing views and translating voice to direct and specific action has potential to contribute to the development of competence (Deci and Ryan, 2012). In addition, paying attention to what is said and the process of working together through genuine collaboration has potential to enhance

relatedness. Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness are three needs highlighted in Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012). Moreover, YCs have highlighted the value of being listening to regarding matters that are important to them (McAndrew et al., 2020).

2.6. The experiences and views of Young Carers

The extant literature suggests that there has been a rise in research relating to YCs and research is increasingly seeking to gain their views directly (Joseph et al., 2020). For example, the Children's Society brought about the YCs' festival in partnership with the YMCA to develop policy and practice (Phelps, 2017). Moreover, it is reported that there is increased participation in forums, befriending groups, YC events (Phelps, 2017) and in participatory research such as, the World Café event (McAndrew et al., 2012).

A review of existing literature was conducted to gather an overview of YCs' experiences and to consider the methods adopted to gain their views.

Findings from the literature have been grouped to represent "central organising concept(s) which capture the essence of what the theme [is] about [...] For example, a pattern of meaning that tells the reader something about it" (Braun and Clarke, 2021a p.137). Themes are presented in Table 5:

Table 5

Themes and research studies from a review of the literature

| Theme | Findings relating to each theme |
|--|---|
| Educational settings: a “safe haven” or an “intrusive” experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive friendships and access to a supportive person (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Thomas et al., 2013; Williams, 2016).• Positive associations were reported between school connectedness and adjustment for YCs (Gough and Gulliford, 2020).• A space for respite or an “escape” from the caring role (Doutre et al., 2013; Gough and Guliford, 2020).• A space to raise awareness of the caring role and promote educational inclusion. However, YCs reported that it is important that caring responsibilities are discussed sensitively and in consultation with them (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; McAndrew et al., 2012).• School as being an “intrusive” space (Thomas et al. 2003).• A place of “judgement and exclusion” or “feeling misunderstood” (Skovdal et al., 2009).• Bullying (McAndrew et al., 2012; Lloyd, 2013). |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma (Bolas et al., 2007; Kennan et al., 2012; McAndrew et al., 2012; Smyth et al., 2011). • Reports of being “invisible”, unacknowledged or “left to manage” (Bjorgvinsdottir and Halldorsdottir, 2014). • Lack of understanding about the caring role (Bolas et al. 2007). • Being disciplined for lateness or absence (Williams, 2016). • A desire to keep home and school life separate (Barry, 2011). |
| <p>Relationships with staff in education settings</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with key adults were reported to provide emotional and psychological support (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Williams, 2016) • A key person for family members to contact (Choudhury and Williams, 2020). • Someone to regularly check in with (constancy) and to talk to (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Thomas et al., 2003; Williams, 2016). • Staff members being “too hard” or “intrusive” (Thomas et al, 2003). • Limited trust (Barry, 2011). |

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| <p>Social support</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YC projects were considered to mediate concerns relating to school and home life (Choudhury and Williams, 2020). • Social support was reported to contribute toward a sense of belonging and inclusion (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Nagl-Cupal and Prajo, 2019; Skovdal et al., 2009). • Projects and key members of staff were said to provide practical, psychological and emotional support (Barry, 2011; Choudhury and Williams, 2020). • Safe social spaces (Choudhury and Williams, 2020). • Projects and events were reported to contribute to a sense of community (Nagl-Cupal and Prajo, 2019; Skovdal et al., 2009). • Respite was considered to be a safe and enjoyable space for some YCs. However, some YCs reported that they also worried about being away from the cared for person (Doutre et al, 2013; Moore and McArthur, 2007; Nagl-Cupal and Prajo 2019). • A Sense of agency (Gough and Gulliford, 2020; McAndrew, 2012). |
|------------------------------|--|

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A break from caregiving responsibilities (Nagl-Cupal and Prajo, 2019). • Spaces for social support such as projects/groups were reported to be over-resourced, overburdened and not always accessible for all (Thomas et al., 2003; Skovdal et al., 2012). • Having positive pro-social relationships with peers and receiving support from key adults including extended family and support groups, were factors which were reported to contribute to feelings of safety and were considered to be a protective and resiliency factor for YCs (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Nagl-Cupal and Prajo, 2019). |
|--|---|

2.7. Whose voice is being heard?

Although there has been growing participation in research from YCs who access YC projects or groups, a question proposed in this research is “whose voice is being spoken and, simultaneously, whose voice is being heard?” (Mannay, 2016, p.6). Gray and Winter (2011) note that it is possible that some individuals are represented more often than others and “assumptions of homogeneity” have the potential to “mask within and between group differences” (p.311). Cremin et al. (2004) proposes

that efforts should be taken to reach populations who may be referred to as “hard to reach”.

The existing literature continues to refer to some YCs as “hard to reach” or a “hidden population” (Doutre et al., 2013; Gough and Gulliford, 2020; Kennan et al. 2012; Thomas et al. 2003). For the purpose of this research the term “seldom heard” is preferred. It is important to note, that the term seldom heard is complex and does not refer to a homogenous group. It has been chosen to describe CYP with different life experiences whose voices may have been less represented in research, or in participatory activities than others.

The researcher also proposes that it is important to consider what is meant by “voice”. For example, Robinson and Taylor (2007) suggest that the concept of “voice” also encompasses more than words that are spoken, such as additional communication and that which is left unsaid. Moreover, Earnshaw (2014) suggests that refusal can be considered a voice shared, as refusal invites adults to consider their ability to change, reminding them to take a step back, to consider their expectations and to invite them to reflect on different approaches and possibilities. Furthermore, Williams (2016) reports that there are some CYP who want to share aspects of their life, while others are “against talking about it” (p.54).

The researcher does not seek to make claims about why some YCs may be represented more than others in research but is interested in understanding how adults are currently listening to YCs and representing their views, and to consider possibilities for participation. The researcher proposes the following questions:

- Who wants to be heard?
- How would they like their voices to be heard?
- How can we develop deeper listening? (Gersch et al., 2017).

2.8. Young carers and the role of the educational psychologist

There is limited research relating to the role of the EP and their involvement with YCs. Although EPs may not be asked to work individually with YCs specifically because they are YCs, they may become involved for various reasons (Gough and Gulliford, 2020).

EPs have a key role in listening, hearing, and representing the views of CYP (Hardy and Hobbs, 2017). In addition, they have a role in supporting adults in their lives to find ways to ascertain and listen to their voices and in ensuring that these voices are heard (Boswell et al., 2021; Gersch et al, 2017, Smillie and Newton, 2020). Legislation highlights the importance of CYP being at the heart of assessment, ensuring that they have agency and choice over matters that are important to them (White and Rae, 2016). Research suggests that there are a variety of approaches that enable adults to listen to the voices of CYP (Harding and Atkinson, 2009), and that YCs have shown that where opportunities for meaningful engagement occur, they have valuable information and contributions to share. However, much of the extant literature including YCs tends to be with those accessing support services and projects.

Boswell et al. (2021) suggests that there is a need to work with “wide enough groups to get a better representation” as opposed to working with “few people with strong

ideas” (p.6). Therefore, the voice of YCs is deemed a worthy area of research as is argued that EPs have a central role in engaging with CYP, promoting inclusion, and reducing barriers to meaningful participation. This may be through direct involvement with the CYP or through working with significant people and organisations in the CYPs life (Fox, 2015).

2.9. Rationale and research questions

Having identified that there have been significant and key contributions to knowledge relating to the voice of the YC and connected with the move toward strength-based approaches (Doutre et al., 2013) and participatory practices (McAndrew et al., 2012) this thesis adopts an approach informed by Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). AI is described as an approach which looks for “the best in people or the world, stating the strengths, successes and potential, both past and present and realising [sic] these things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, p.9). This approach is open to the discovery of possibilities (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005).

It is proposed that an AI approach may provide opportunities to gather an appreciation of current practices adopted by professionals with respect to listening to and representing the views of YCs (Discovery), with a view to exploring possibilities for the future (Dream). The research questions were developed to be congruent with the lens of AI and are included in Table 6.

Table 6

Research questions

| Research Questions |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How are young carers constructed by support services?2. What are support services experiences of listening to and hearing the voices of young carers? This is in keeping with the “Discovery” stage of AI. Reflecting on the positive aspects of existing practice in establishing and promoting young carers voices.3. How could support services understand, represent, and promote the views of young carers? This question is centred in the “Dream” stage, envisioning a potential future for understanding, representing, and promoting the views of young carers. |

3. Methodology and methods

3.1. Ontological and epistemological perspective

The ontological and epistemological perspective sets the scene for the research and guides decision making regarding a number of processes such as methods adopted, the research question, the analysis and how findings are interpreted and presented (Mertens, 2010). Ontology is concerned with the question “what is there to know?” (Willig, 2013, p.12). To explore this question the research takes a relativist position. Relativist ontology takes into account that the construct “YC” exists but allows for recognition that participants perceptions and experiences may be different and that there is not a singular truth. As such, it can be said that a relativist positioning takes

the stance that the question “what is there to know?” is answered through multiple interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Epistemology poses the question “how, and what can we know?” (Willig, 2013, p.12) considering ways in which individuals construct and interpret what they know about the world (Willig, 2013). A social constructionist stance is taken to capture participants active position in the research and their engagement with social systems, relationships and language in the world, recognising that realities can be shaped by interactions with others (Burr, 2015).

3.2. Data collection and approach to research

In keeping with the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research, a qualitative design was chosen to explore participants’ perspectives on representing and promoting the voice of YCs.

3.3. Focus groups

A focus group was chosen to allow a space for participants to stimulate discussion regarding the area of interest, while also providing a space for collaboration and reflection through group interaction (Barbour, 2007). Focus groups can also allow insights into shared views within an organisation and are consistent with AI principles, whereby meaning is co-constructed and change can be created through group interaction (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005).

However, a potential limitation of the focus group method is the possibility of social desirability bias and “group think” (Carey and Smith, 1994). In addition, differences within the group have potential to impact power dynamics (Toner, 2009). Dyads and

group discussions therefore took place using the breakout room function of Microsoft Teams to create opportunities to change the group dynamics (Toner, 2009).

Important to note, a co-facilitator (Trainee Educational Psychologist) was available through the duration of the focus group. The role of the co-facilitator was to provide support in the breakout rooms as it was not possible for the researcher to be present in both break out rooms. Their role was to clarify any comments, encourage contributions and remind participants of any key areas for discussion that had been added to the chat function by the researcher (Bates, 2021). The co-facilitator also had an important role in recording the breakout room discussion. Participants were made aware of the co-facilitator before taking part in the research via the information sheet (Appendix G) and they were reminded again at the beginning of the focus group.

As mentioned, the focus group took place via the online platform Microsoft Teams. presents potential benefits, challenges, and considerations of using online platforms for research (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2017).

Table 7

Benefits and challenges associated with online focus groups

Benefits

- Greater ease and flexibility regarding scheduling e.g. time and travel.
- Possibility of connecting with people across different regions.
- Potentially adds to flexibility around scheduling.
- Ease of capturing data.
- Possible greater control for participants.
- Comfort of being in a familiar location which has potential to encourage participants to be more open.
- Allows for tracking for example, how long participants have spoken and interacted.
- Opportunities to use the chat and raise hand function (features to aid contribution).

(Stewart and Shamdasani, 2017).

Challenges

- Reported potential to reduce spontaneity or nonverbal communication.
- Can reduce the intimacy of the group.
- Possible challenges with software and bandwidth (quality of internet connection).
- Requires participant understanding of the online platform.
- The facilitator and moderator need to be confident with the platform.
- Possible challenges with closing groups where sensitive information has been shared.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of physical stimuli to inform discussions may be reduced e.g., pictures, images, flipchart paper, craft. (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2017). |
| Considerations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher ensured that an introduction took place to bring together the group. The purpose of the focus group was made clear, and participants were introduced to features of Microsoft Teams which could aid contribution. • The researcher checked that participants were familiar with the platform Microsoft Teams prior to the focus group and provided opportunities for participants to ask any questions or raise concerns they may have. • Ethical considerations are outlined regarding the opening and closing of the focus group (see Table 10). |

Note. adapted from Online focus groups by Stewart and Shamdasani (2017).

Online focus groups were considered appropriate given the strengths highlighted. Importantly, the researcher was alert to the present context regarding Covid-19 and wanted to reduce any potential discomfort regarding in person meetings. Moreover, the researcher was aware that prospective participants could be working with YCs who may be supporting a vulnerable family member, therefore online focus groups were considered an ethically informed choice.

3.4. Appreciative Inquiry and the development of the focus group schedule

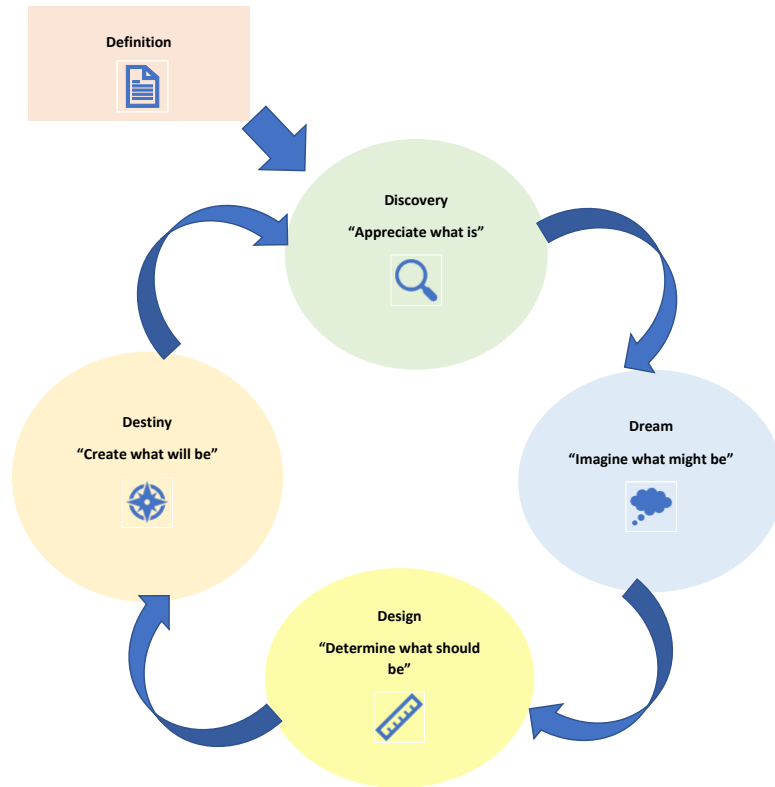
An AI approach was chosen to explore how phenomena are socially constructed (Lewis et al., 2008). As previously discussed, there has been a growing emphasis on seeking the views of YCs (Phelps, 2017) and on participatory research (McAndrew et al., 2012; Skovdal et al., 2009). However, literature continues to refer to some YCs as a “hard to reach” or a “hidden” population (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Doutre et al., 2013; Kennan et al., 2012). AI was considered appropriate to explore current practices and approaches used to elicit, represent, and promote the views of YCs to identify “the best of what is” with a view to exploring “what might be” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000). AI is reported to have potential to evaluate practice, re-focus strengths and to develop thinking (Coughlan et al., 2003). Reed (2007) emphasises that this approach is about “appreciating activities and responses of people, rather than concentrating on the problems” (p.2). Moreover, it is suggested that AI has potential to address power imbalances as participants are considered co-constructors of change. This was thought to be important as the researcher was aware that the focus group would be taking place with participants who have a range of different experiences and backgrounds in relation to their work with YCs.

Note: Further reflections and considerations on the AI approach are offered in part 3 of the thesis.

A focus group schedule was developed to guide the discussion and allow for participants to share their views (Crotty, 1998). Questions were open ended and informed by the “5 D” model of AI (Stavros, Godwin, and Cooperrider, 2016) as depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4

An Illustration of the Appreciative Inquiry 5D-Cycle



Note. adapted from Appreciative inquiry: A positive revolution in change (p.5) by Cooperrider et al. 2005.

The format was adapted from Morris and Atkinson's (2018) research, whereby AI was utilised to provide a forum to co-construct through a series of group and paired discussions. For the purpose of this thesis, the cycle was condensed into two stages (Discovery and Dream). Table 8 outlines the focus group schedule which was used in this research.

Table 8

AI informed focus group schedule

| Phase of AI | Focus | Activities and questions |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Introducing the research project.</p> | <p>Highlighting the focus:</p> <p>Exploring ways to promote and represent the voices of YCs.</p> <p>Discussing and sharing constructions relating to the term “YC”.</p> | <p>Considering constructions of the term “YC” and sharing phrases and terms that could be used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question: I’m interested in the term “YC”, to your mind who are YCs? <i>note: there are many ways in which YCs can be described and people have different ideas, I am interested in your thoughts</i> - Prompt: Can you think of any key phrases or terms which could be used to describe the term “YC”? <p><i>Group discussion including what shaped participant constructions.</i></p> |
| <p>Discovery</p> | <p>Exploring aspects of current practice including “good practice” and what is working well relating to listening</p> | <p>Paired or triad discussions (depending on the number of participants in the group).</p> <p>Common aspects shared in practice and thoughts about what has worked well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question: What are your experiences of working with YCs? |

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| | <p>to the voices of YCs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question: What are your experiences of listening to and representing the views of YCs? <p>Prompt: Can you think of approaches or tools that have helped you to listen to the views of children and young people?</p> <p>Additional prompts/questions: Can you tell me more about...? What worked well?</p> <p>(The researcher will <i>encourage reflections on the tools/approaches/frameworks used</i>).</p> |
| <p>Dream</p> | <p>Possibilities and best hopes for enabling dialogue, representing, and promoting the voices of YCs.</p> <p>Envisioning the future.</p> | <p>“Miracle question” emphasising “blue sky thinking”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Imagine waking up tomorrow morning and there was a way of working to elicit and represent the voices of YCs. What would this look like?” <p>Prompts: What do you feel may be helpful when thinking about ways for hearing the voices of YCs in the future?</p> |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What might YCs notice about the approach? - How would they know they are being heard? • Alternative question: If you had one wish for developing an approach or tool to promote or represent the voices of YCs what would it be? <p><i>Individual thoughts and reflections followed by a paired discussion.</i></p> <p><i>Feedback to the group to discuss common themes.</i></p> |
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Note. Adapted from How can educational psychologists work within further education to support young people’s mental health? An appreciative inquiry. Research in Post-Compulsory Education (p.297) by Morris and Atkinson, 2018.

Although a schedule was used as a prompt, it is important to note that AI is a participatory approach and therefore the wording, order and structure of the schedule was flexible and was influenced by paired and group discussions (Morris and Atkinson, 2018).

3.5. Participants and recruitment

Participants were recruited via purposive sampling and were invited to take part if they were, an EP working for an EPS in the UK; a staff member currently working in a mainstream secondary school or FE College in the UK; a member of staff working for a YC project or support group in the UK. It was also stipulated that they must have/had experience of working with a CYP who they consider to be a YC; have an interest in developing practice around representing and promoting the voices of YCs and were willing for the researcher to feedback discussion ideas with YCs.

The researcher contacted 12 EPS', 42 YC support services/projects/organisations and 50 education settings in the UK. The recruitment procedure is outlined in Table 9.

Table 9

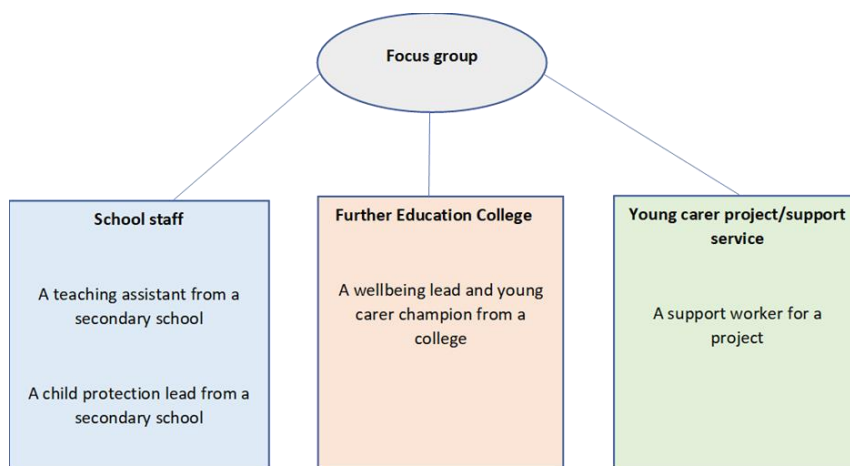
Recruitment procedure

| Recruitment procedure |
|---|
| Gatekeeper letters (Appendix C, D and E) and an information sheet (Appendix G) were sent to gatekeepers (Service/project leads, Headteachers/FE coordinators, and principal EPs) via email. Gatekeepers were asked whether they would be willing to share the information sheet with staff members in their service/education setting who met the inclusion criteria. |
| The researcher also published a research poster on social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter (Appendix F) |
| Prospective participants were required to contact the researcher directly to express an interest in the study. They were asked to read and complete a consent form (Appendix H) and return it directly to the researcher via email in order to take part. |
| The researcher contacted participants with possible dates for the focus group to take place. Participants were then invited to take part in a focus group via Microsoft Teams. |

An expression of interest was received from five YC project/support workers, two staff members from secondary school settings and one staff member from an FE college. Although an expression of interest was received from eight prospective participants, the final number of participants in the study was four due to unforeseen circumstances including illness and work commitments. Figure 5 includes information about the focus group composition.

Figure 5

Focus group composition



All participants were working in Wales at the time of data collection. Further demographic information was not collected.

Data collection was originally due to take place between July and September 2021, however due to a number of factors including changes to the methods and challenges with recruitment, data collection subsequently occurred in April 2022.

3.6. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted by Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee for the School of Psychology. Table 10 below highlights the steps taken to ensure that the research was conducted ethically.

Table 10

Steps taken to ensure ethical responsibility

| Consideration | Steps taken to ensure ethical responsibility |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Ensuring appropriate informed consent | <p>The researcher emailed a gatekeeper letter (Appendices C, D and E). Gatekeepers were asked whether they would be willing to share the information sheet (Appendix G) and consent document (Appendix H) with their teams.</p> <p>Prospective participants were required to complete the consent form (Appendix H) and return it directly to the researcher via email after reading the relevant information.</p> <p>Once consent had been obtained focus groups were organised. Prior to the focus group, the researcher read aloud information about the research to ensure that participants were aware of their research rights.</p> <p>Participants were also made aware that a TEP would be in attendance for the duration of the focus group as an additional facilitator.</p> |

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| | <p>The researcher did not contact prospective participants until an expression of interest was received via e-mail or the consent information had been returned.</p> <p>To ensure transparency the researcher shared key areas that may be raised in the focus group via the research information sheet (Appendix G). In addition, this was considered important to ensure that participants were aware of the overall rationale and their research rights.</p> |
| Confidentiality | <p>Focus group interviews took place via Microsoft Teams with the researcher and an additional facilitator. The information sheet reminded participants that due to the nature of the focus group confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and this was made known to participants. The information sheet and consent form highlighted the importance of confidentiality in the focus group</p> <p>The data from the focus group remained confidential until the point of transcription where identifying information was anonymised.</p> <p>Interview recordings were stored on a password protected device and were transcribed within a two-week time frame following the focus group. They were deleted immediately following transcription.</p> |

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| Anonymity | <p>Participants were informed about the process of anonymity prior to the focus group and during the debrief. Data remained confidential until the point of transcription.</p> <p>Transcriptions were made anonymous (removing identifying information). Pseudo names were used in place of participant names. Once focus groups were transcribed the recordings were permanently deleted.</p> |
| Right to withdraw | <p>Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the focus group at any time without a given reason. They were also reminded at the end of the focus group interview that there would be a two-week time frame to inform the researcher of their decision to withdraw.</p> <p>If a decision was made to withdraw, all information would be destroyed and excluded from the research. No participants withdrew.</p> <p>Participants were informed that once the focus group data had been transcribed and recordings deleted, they would no longer be able to withdraw from the research as their identity would not be identifiable from the data.</p> |
| Debrief | <p>At the end of the focus group the participant debrief form was read aloud. Participants were also provided with a debrief sheet (Appendix J) via email. Participants were provided with the researcher's email address and the</p> |

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| | research supervisor’s email address to request any further information or to express concerns. |
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3.7. Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The focus group was transcribed verbatim and analysed using Braun and Clarke’s (2021) six-step RTA. This approach was chosen to acknowledge the researcher’s positionality and to reflect on the active and creative process (Braun and Clarke, 2021). The process of analysis was inductive, and codes represented something important about participant accounts in relation to the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2021) describe TA as being a continuum whereby induction and deduction do not sit in opposition and acknowledge the positioning and the active and systemic engagement of the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Braun and Clarke (2021) posit that is not possible for the researcher to take a purely inductive approach as the researcher can be considered a “metaphorical sculptor” with their “skills, training, disciplinary knowledge, biography and socio-demographic positioning actively engaging with data” (p.130).

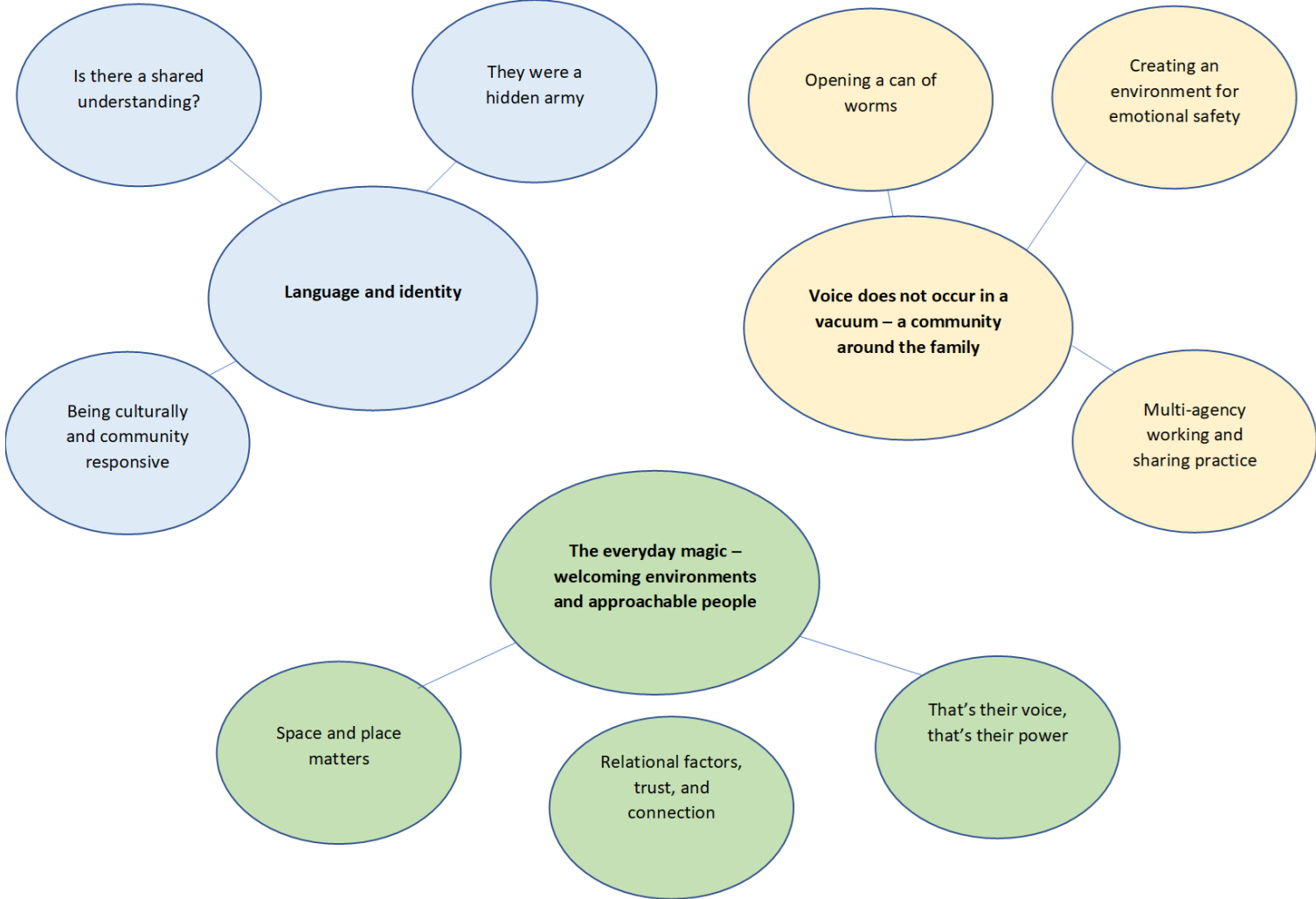
Note: further information and reflections on the analysis are offered in part 3 and Appendix K.

4. Analysis and discussion

The analysis and discussion section are presented together to allow for synthesis and contextualisation of the themes and analytic observations with respect to relevant theory and literature (Braun and Clarke, 2020). This was felt to deepen the engagement with the data and reflects the reflective and reflexive approach taken (Braun and Clarke, 2020). The researcher emphasises the recursive and interactive process with different stages of the analysis, recognising that it was not a linear stage by stage process and instead involved revisiting stages, refining, and adapting to capture the essence of the data. Three overarching themes and nine subthemes are presented to capture “something important about the data in relation to the research questions and [represent] some level of patterned response and meaning making within the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.82). The themes capture professionals’ views relating to the research questions and reference to YCs’ experiences are discussed from the perspectives of four participants who have experience of working with YCs. Themes are illustrated in a Thematic Map (Figure 6). The analysis and discussion are presented below.

Figure 6

Thematic Map



4.1. Theme 1: Language and identity

This theme highlights the role of language and discourse in shaping constructions of caring and reflects participant constructions around caring and childhood.

Participants referred to YCs as a distinct group of CYP, while also highlighting the diversity and complexity of individual life experiences. It was reported that there may be an increased understanding around YCs which was considered to have raised awareness of the number of YCs in education settings. However, it was highlighted that there may also be also a number of CYP who may not be identified. Variation in terms and definitions, and the degree to which CYP self-identify with dominant discourses were considered factors which possibly had an impact on engagement with services.

The concept of voice and choice was discussed whereby participants emphasised that there was a need to respect that caring may be viewed as part of family life and therefore some CYP may not see their role as being congruent with terms and definitions. Despite whether the CYP self-identifies as a YC, participants discussed the importance of ensuring that YCs have a right to know about support and how to access it should they want and/or need it.

4.1.1. Is there a shared understanding

Participants typically provided descriptions which were consistent with the existing literature. They spoke about the caring role encompassing practical, physical,

emotional, and psychological support for a relative (Joseph et al., 2009, Warren, 2007).

“So, you know some children who helped look after their siblings because of certain disabilities and we've also got some children who may not um have a huge caring role at home with regards to like housework and things like that but who worry um emotionally, um they're mostly impacted by parents” (Participant 2)

Interestingly, the age range described by Participant 1 includes YP who the law recognises as being a young adult or adult carer.

“People under 25, young people who care for um a relative or sibling, something like that, and on a daily basis with all activities of daily living” (Participant 1).

Participants shared that there is a tension between ensuring that definitions are “broad” enough to encompass varied lived experiences while simultaneously “simplifying” (Participant 1) definitions to ensure clarity. Findings highlighted that a single definition could be considered too narrow and therefore may not represent the various caring roles that CYP may undertake. However broad definitions may have potential to lose specificity.

For example, Participant 1 shared constructions of “caring” including care related courses in college or careers which involve caring.

“Sometimes on induction we can ask them (students) um are you a young carer and they say, oh yes, I'm on a care course or I work in a care home um so it's very difficult for them to identify” (Participant 1).

“I think it's peer support as well of yeah, other young people understanding the role and the impact that it can have and peers being supportive of that and having a really good awareness and understanding of the young carer's role 'cause, it's not just, it's it varies, doesn't it” (Participant 3).

This reflects similar discussions by Joseph et al. (2020) who suggest that there is a risk of some terms or definitions being too “exclusive” whereas others may be too “broad” and therefore they propose a definition of caring being on a continuum which is illustrated through three concentric circles (see Joseph et al., 2020, p. 83).

4.1.2. Being culturally and community responsive

Throughout the focus group participants referred to different perceptions of caring highlighting both strengths and challenges. Participants emphasised that from their experiences of working with YCs it was perceived that some CYP are “proud” of their caring role and “love what they do” (Participant 3).

“They very much enjoy what they do. The majority of them are really proud and they really, they like, they like to do the role” (Participant 3).

Accounts also appeared to highlight that for some CYP caring can be understood as a normative developmental process (O’Dell et al., 2010) with some YCs not “identifying” as being a YC because caring is something which is embedded in family life and may be in alignment with family beliefs about childhood (Smyth et al., 2011). For example, participant 3 shared the following reflection.

“Discussing that there’s a young carers assessment and can be done with the children to know that they’ve been identified as young carers, but they were both quite reluctant to do it. Cause they didn’t want to be labelled as young carers or identified because it was just like they have grown up in that role and it was what they've always known. Umm so I just sort of said, oh, like there will be a young carers ID badge, we provide different opportunities such as youth clubs and stuff. You can get to speak to others, and they don't sort of go out much either to be honest. Um so they were sort of accepting of it and we went through the assessment, and they now got the young carers badges and which they’re happy with and they have also started to attend the youth clubs that we’ve got on and made some really lovely friendships with others” (Participant 3)

Doutre et al. (2013) suggested that it is important to listen to each CYP regarding their circumstances to understand what caring means to them and to understand constructions “in the context of their lives” (p.39). Similarly, participants in this study felt that there are some YCs who “love it all” (Participant 3), some who may have “grown up in that role” (Participant 3) and some “who don’t want to be identified at all” (Participant 2).

Some participants reported they were not always aware of a CYPs caring responsibilities which impacted on the identification of YCs and on ensuring that they received available support. This was in part linked to fear and worry about what might happen and who might become involved (see theme 2) but was also linked to constructions around caring and childhood, for example caring was described as being part of family life and was therefore not discussed in school. It was suggested that some CYP only become known to education settings due to other circumstances relating to their wellbeing, attendance or concerns raised by staff members.

Although it was recognised that there is a need to be understanding of individual and family beliefs, values and circumstances. Participants described a balance between listening to what CYP want while also ensuring they met a duty to support their needs such as their wellbeing. This accords with Phelps (2017) who described a need to take time to understand family circumstances while also ensuring that ethical responsibilities adhered to.

Accounts reflected a shift in focus from the term YC to a focus on responding to need and letting all CYP know that there is available support.

“Different ways with dealing with, you know, sort of the different young carers, you know, if it's one that doesn't wanna be identified it'll just be the case then we use an internal school robin system, so it will just alert staff to the fact that they are young carers just to keep that extra eye on them but obviously not to highlight anything”

(Participant 2)

“They didn't wanna highlight themselves. So the badges was a no, but they know they have the support” (Participant 4)

This corroborates with research by Spratt et al. (2018) who noted that it is important to see the YC as an individual as opposed to a label.

4.1.3. They were a hidden army

Participants described an increased awareness of YCs in education settings and services. They discussed local and global events, forums and projects which were considered to be platforms to raise the YC profile, and to provide opportunities for voices to be heard.

“I think they do young carers events as well globally on the (.) with young carers festivals and stuff which provide that platform I think for the young carers to voice, uh their feelings and opinions on things and their wants on perhaps what could be done differently,

and I think it's just growing and growing every year now isn't it?"

(Participant 3)

"We highlight you know things like Carers Action Day, Carers action week. Anything like that is promoted, and learner led" (Participant 1)

When discussing increasing awareness in schools, participant 3 shared that YCs were previously known as the "hidden army".

"Schools are way more aware now of, um, of young carers cuz it was sort of known as the hidden army of, of young carers wasn't it and it's surprising when I last finished my, the primary school I was in, we pretty much had near enough from reception so reception year one to year six a young carer in every class" (Participant 3)

The term "army" possibly reflects tensions discussed by participants for example, they reported that there are some YCs who were described as active in sharing their voice as part of a group, team, or project and "that's their power" (Participant 1). On the other hand, there are CYP who "don't want to be identified at all" (Participant 2). In considering the term "army" this may represent the idea of a camouflage with regard to caring for example, remaining out of sight. Alternatively, it could refer to the "power" of the group in coming together (see theme 3).

Participants reported that there are a number of ways in which education settings and projects listen to voices of YCs in order to inform practices. For example,

Participant 1 spoke about working collaboratively with YCs to create a webpage to represent YCs, to describe what they do and to highlight the support available.

Similarly, to findings by Choudhury and Williams (2020) it was recognised that education staff and project support workers had a role in developing the confidence of CYP to raise awareness of caring. However, it was also recognised that this should not be “forceful” (Participant 3).

Participant 3 raised that there are some CYP who do not want to talk about their caring role and therefore indirect or discrete ways to support their participation were considered important to ensure that CYP received information and were aware of support available.

“The banner that sort of says about young carers and I think that's a nice discrete way if they want it 'cause some are very, quite open about it and some don't tend to wanna talk about that” (Participant 3)

However, arguably there remains a need to continue to challenge the stigma which possibly has an impact on participation for some CYP (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Williams, 2016).

It was thought that media exposure or celebrities coming forward would be beneficial to “give them that role model” or someone to “look up to” (Participant 4).

Similarly, Participant 1 said,

“I’d love there to be a celebrity or something that came forward and said I was young carer because you’ve got more like for, I don’t know, but there is never anybody from young carers point of view is there. I’d love somebody to champion it. Just say, look, look what I am now and just to empower them” (Participant 1)

It could be argued that there is a double-edged sword when reflecting on media and role models. For example, they could be construed positively with regard to challenging stigma and raising the profile of caring, however there may be a need to consider the degree to which dominant discourses may shape particular constructions of how caring may be experienced. These representations may reflect some CYPs experiences to an extent but may not feel congruent with others. For example, Orbe (2013) refers to the notion of media effects which describes “the influence the media has on audiences and representations and reflects the portrayals of various cultural groups” (Orbe, 2013, p.235). However, individuals may also “find ways to resist and reject such representations or versions of themselves and their position” (Howarth, 2006, p.5-6).

4.2. Theme 2: Voice does not occur in a vacuum – a community around the family

Listening to the voice of YCs was described as something that extends beyond the individual. Participants discussed creating physical and emotionally safe spaces for the whole family and for those working with the family. Approaches were underpinned by warm, safe, and trustworthy relationships. Having an awareness of

the views and values of the whole family was considered by professionals to be important to gain a holistic understanding of child, this included taking time to “reassure” parents/carers. This is reflective of research by Choudhury and Williams (2020) which highlighted the role of key adults in mediating concerns.

The value of multi-agency working was also discussed with regard to ensuring joined up and consistent approaches between systems. When discussing the “Dream” participants shared possibilities for building connections between settings regarding key transition points in CYPs lives. It was highlighted that actively listening to one part of the system (parents/carers) had potential to enable opportunities to hear other parts of the system (the CYP). This is consistent with the concept of equifinality which can be described as a “ripple in the water” as there may be multiple ways to hear voices and different ways to achieve this outcome.

In sum, this theme highlights that the voice of YCs and their participation “cannot be understood in isolation from the social, cultural and political contexts in which it occurs” (Hardy and Hobbs, 2017 p.180). Emphasis was placed on interconnections in the mesosystem such as education settings, the family and the community (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994).

4.2.1. Opening a can of worms

The subtheme “opening up a can of worms” reflected challenges associated with listening to the voice of the child and balancing confidentiality, safeguarding and wellbeing responsibilities. For example, participants described CYP being cautious about disclosing their caring role to education settings or projects which they felt may be due to concerns about children’s services involvement. This finding is

consistent with existing literature. For example, Kennan et al. (2012) proposes that YCs and their families may “fear an invasion of privacy” or “drawing attention” (p. 276).

“I think the perception is that, you know, if the children are doing things at home to help out, then, you know, children services are going to be involved and it opens up the whole can of worms, so for some of our children, you know, we don't get that consent to work with them either” (Participant 2)

“I mean you know we've opened up cans of worms ourselves because sometimes you have a learner that only comes to us as a young carer because they've been down disciplinary because for their absence or attendance or something and then we are picking them up or they break in tears and then when you're unravelling” (Participant 1)

Participants shared that responding to the voice of YCs was not without its challenges and communication involved interactive processes which span into nested systems around the child.

“Like the person being cared for might call us and be in tears feeling so guilty um whereas we could support the young carers but sometimes the family, then are feeling so traumatised” (Participant 1)

Participants described a level of secrecy in relation to caring responsibilities. Secrecy was attributed to family concerns and CYP not wanting parts of their identity to be revealed. Dominant discourses and constructions surrounding children's services were predominantly associated with "trouble", "creating a big issue" or "worry".

"But we've gotta have parental consent and I think sometimes parents are very worried that they're going to get into trouble"
(Participant 2).

"Sometimes you're helping and then are you creating a really big issue for that child and so it can be tough" (Participant 1).

"So quite often, like our children will say, yeah, I'm a young carer right and I do this, this and this and then you ring home and parents will saying no, no, they don't do any of that" (Participant 2).

Participants described the emotional experiences involved in listening, hearing and building trust. They reflected on their role in responding and containing the emotional experiences of the CYP and their family members.

Bion (1984) offers a concept which the researcher deems relevant to participant accounts and particularly when reflecting on the interacting systems around the YC. This concept is known as "container-contained" and is used to describe the way in which the main caregiver responds to and holds their baby's frustration and emotions otherwise known as the "unmanageable" (container). This gives the baby

the message that their emotions can be thought about and understood. The parent can then return these emotions to the baby, for example, through reassurance when the baby is ready. Bion (1984) suggests that similarly to a parent-child relationship, adults have the same need for an available adult to manage their feelings and to hand them back in a way that feels more manageable. It is possible that the participants in this research may be offering a containing space when listening to and responding to parent or carers concerns about service involvement. It may also be important to consider the emotional experiences of the participants themselves, for example a participant shared that it can be “tough”.

There were also reflections regarding how much power CYP have when sharing their voice. Discussions regarding consent and confidentiality raised questions about times where YCs share their experiences with a trusted adult, however protection rights create potential conflicts regarding what happens with the conversations. Participants shared accounts of occasions where they needed to make decisions in the best interests of the YC even when this was at “odds with their wishes” (Boswell et al., 2021).

4.2.2. Creating an environment for emotional safety

When reflecting on navigating the abovementioned tensions (opening a can of worms), all participants emphasised the importance of developing relationships and maintaining a connection with YCs and their families through in depth and ongoing work.

“With us in the school, we've got a very good um rapport, home school link, you know, so the parents are aware and so the child doesn't gotta go home and worry that they've said something wrong, so it's quite open. Um, so we find that that relaxes them more and then they're able to come into the, uh, wellbeing room and they are able to talk a lot more openly. So they don't feel they're gonna get in trouble, you know?” (Participant 4)

Emphasis was placed on creating environments for emotional safety where trust, rapport, open communication, and home school links could be developed to facilitate opportunities to enable dialogue (Gameson and Rhydderch, 2008). In this research, effective relationships included warmth, genuineness and empathy which accord with Rogerian based principles through emphasis on positive affirmation (Beaver, 2011).

“I think some sort of uh parents and carers having that understanding that that you know needing help from your child is actually OK, you know, you're not going to get in trouble with children services, and you know there is dedicated help out there and I think that way more children will sort of come through as well 'cause as I said without the permission of parents and carers, we're unable to work with the children and I think there is a lot of stigma

around it and the fact that they feel they're going to get into a lot of trouble because of it" (Participant 2)

"Um, and also once all our trust is sort of built up, they can share any concern that they have for us then as support workers to maybe put some other additional support in place" (Participant 3)

Listening to the people who know the CYP best was considered a means to gain a holistic picture of the CYP. In this sense, listening could be regarded a journey which takes time, as opposed to being a single event or "destination" (Boswell et al., 2021).

4.2.3. Multi-agency working and sharing practice

Participants also highlighted a need for communication to take place between services in order to share "good practice". It was felt that joined up approaches between LAs and education settings had created potential to pool resources.

"We work in conjunction with the local authority and they're very, very good... like you said (Participant 2)" (Participant 1).

"To share what they would really like from the support within our service and for young carers that we can put in place or maybe reach out to other organizations to sort of implement that additional support that they might want or need" (Participant 3).

Participants reported that there had been increased opportunities to connect with CYP and their families following the Covid-19 restrictions as there had been a shift to online working. This was described as an opportunity to gain a deeper insight about family life. Communicative platforms were also thought to enhance opportunities to share practice between services.

“You know some good things have come out of lock down and like this (focus group) for example, and like teams, you know, if we didn't have this where would we be then?” (Participant 2).

Interestingly, participants also referred to the focus group as a place to share practice.

“I think it's been lovely today to share good practice with everybody and to meet you all” (Participant 1)
“Are we doing this again (focus group)?” (Participant 1)

School transition and post-16 planning was discussed when reflecting on the “Dream”. A joined-up approach around sharing information was felt to be important to ensure that “good practice” was translated between systems.

“Um and then we are looking forward to their future where young carers um are they going to go to university or what employment do they have because not all companies have the carers policy in place, you know flexible working or things like that so we're trying to look

at it in the future where they go not just finished college and that's
it, back home and caring and so again there is so much you can do"
(Participant 1)

Concerns were raised about future aspirations for YCs upon leaving education. The discourse "that's it, back home caring" may imply that YCs may not want to continue their caring role.

This finding reflects research by Bjorgvinsdottir and Halldorsdottir (2014) who proposed that YCs may seek to use the skills that they have already developed to move into caring as a career, particularly where caring is thought to have had an impact on school attainment. Participants shared that it is important to set high aspirations for YCs and to ensure that the necessary support is available to help them to ascertain their goals. However, Participant 3 emphasised the importance of understanding the wishes of each CYP as they felt that some "love everything about it".

4.3. Theme 3: The everyday magic - welcoming environments and approachable people

Emphasis was placed on people who are best placed to develop connections and to establish trust. The "who" involved in listening was considered to be just as important as the tools, the approach or frameworks used for listening. It was noted that without relationships and rapport there is potential risk of tokenistic participation.

All participants referred to everyday interactions which take place in natural environments and reflected on taking time to build upon the approaches that work.

There was a call to re-consider the concept of voice and participation and discussions took place regarding the power dynamics that can occur in spaces. Ordinary and natural everyday spaces were considered to “open up ‘lines of flight’ which enable children and adults to leave the traditional child–adult dichotomy and create something unexpected” (Alme and Reime, 2021, p113).

4.3.1. Relational factors, trust and connection

Although participants spoke about specific interventions, tools, approaches, and assessments that had been part of their work with YCs, in depth conversations took place regarding the “everyday magic” that occurs through a passing smile, an open door and “checking in”.

“Most of the time I go and find them to just, you know, everything okay. Just a little smile, you know, just to let ‘em know where we are if they need us through the day” (Participant 4)

“I think (Participant 4’s) school are doing it already, is having that, um, welcoming environment and, and staff who are approachable, that they can sort of speak to that they know who’ve got that good understanding of the young carer and the role and what it could entail and what impact it could have on their daily life” (Participant 3)

In addition, participants highlighted the use of effective communication skills to demonstrate to CYP that they have been seen, heard, valued, and understood. This

required professionals to notice different forms of communication for example, recognising “a young person coming in and they look a little bit dishevelled or tired” (Participant 1). This reflects that understanding and representing voice may not always mean responding to the words that are spoken. It can also be about adults being attuned to CYP’s needs and this was reported to require a knowledge of the YC and having genuine empathy.

“Having those check-in sessions with them so it gives them that time to talk to us. Um, and then eventually then not using the wellbeing room so much because they feel here, they feel like they’ve had their needs met by perhaps, um adjusting the homework times, um you know, anything like that has been put in place then. So they’re less likely to be, feel stressed or under pressure” (Participant 4).

“It is trust as well. Isn’t it? They feel that trust in you, or if there is anything that’s going on at all, they know they can come to you as that person and you can sort it out for them throughout the day in school, you know” (Participant 4)

“Put a blanket around them and go to sleep for now or, you know, when they feel refreshed when they wake up then and you know, they're ready for the day” (Participant 4)

This subtheme accords with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1954) for example, supporting the development of safety, belonging and security in order for CYP to feel willing and able to participate or share their “voice”.

4.3.2. That’s their voice, that’s their power

Participants felt that there is value in CYP having opportunities to connect with peers. Terms such as “power” and “empowerment” were used to describe YCs coming together. Nagl-cupal and Prajo (2019) describe this as ‘sensuscommunis’ which refers to a feeling of belonging to a community. This subtheme also appeared to echo findings by Williams (2016) who found that good friendships, a supportive person to talk to and opportunities to access extra-curricular activities were noted to be protective factors linked to school-based resilience.

“They love being here back with a group that that's their voice that’s their power together” (Participant 1).

“They um empower each other, and they are quite excitable, and they love their trips like you said, (participant 3), anything like that and it gets them together they they're off” (Participant 1).

Drawing on self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012), findings from this subtheme are consistent with the domain of autonomy and relatedness, for example YCs having voice and choice with regard to who they share their views with and how they chose to share them. Participant 3 spoke about the importance of not being “forceful” when referring to participation and emphasised the value of providing

spaces and places for CYP to share what they feel comfortable sharing and to enable opportunities for CYP to participate in a way that accords with their values.

“Really nice for them to come out and do those activities together and again, that allows that conversation, I suppose, to naturally when they’re busy doing other things to sort of speak about what they’re feeling and what perhaps they, what they like, what they don’t like, what they’d like to sort of see more of” (participant 3)

“When they come in and they see their friends that they’ve made and they can just sit and chill and that’s when they can talk about when they’ve had a really, really rubbish week or they’ve had a really positive week or this might be worrying them” (Participant 3)

“Um I think knowing that a young person and whether or not they want to be able to share their own views and stuff, rather than being forceful with it and putting them on the spot. It’s just knowing they’re comfortable in those situations to be able to share and that’s helpful” (Participant 3)

Participant discussions appeared to capture the essence of autonomous (self-directed) motivation being a factor which appeared to contribute to opportunities to hear what CYP have to say for example, “using their preferred way of

communicating, in an environment in which they feel comfortable and with people who understand them best” (Whithurst, 2006 cited in Harding 2017 p.109).

4.3.3. Space and place matters

This subtheme captures participant accounts regarding accessibility to natural and comfortable spaces. The informal nature of these environments reflected a move from adult directed activities to child-initiated activities and spaces to facilitate shared decisions with YCs (Hart, 2008). Participant discussions reflected that having a genuine interest in each CYP, including their hobbies, and valuing their beliefs facilitated “authentic connection” (Deci et al, 1994). Participants emphasised the importance of creating spaces for shared experiences of joy, fun, togetherness, and community. This was achieved through a combination of formal and informal projects, activities, and events.

“It was like almost six or seven weeks I think that they, they came in, they were like cleaning up the garden, painting the fences, nailing, like the things back in, planting flowers and their families were able to come along and obviously staff then provide the transport to the families that maybe need it. But it was really nice” (Participant 3).

“So it was a very small group. I think it was 11 young carers and they, they could invite two members of their family then. So they had an afternoon tea in the park and you know, it was just a nice little celebration” (Participant 4)

Discussions regarding funding, organisation of travel and bringing events into the community highlight that listening does not occur in a vacuum.

“We've actually got the youth clubs now sort of dotted around throughout (place name) because obviously with COVID and being able to transport, but we've just made it so that all the young carers, it's near enough that we can sort of um accommodate them so that they can come along because they really like coming” (Participant 3).

“But it was just sort of a nice outdoor activity as well given with COVID and stuff that they were able to meet up weekly and building up those relationships with others um and the parents were able to sort of our chat and stuff as well and the carers. Um that sort of uh, that worked really, really well and we did win an award, so we've been funded another amount of money now within (service) so we're gonna be doing another big garden project, which is again for young carers to sort of run with their families and hoping to have like a green house and stuff and growing vegetables and stuff and just really, really positive” (Participant 3)

Analysis reflected that ability to facilitate participation can be influenced by external systems which can enable or constrain opportunities.

Participant 3 shared that while it is important to ensure that time is taken to hear and listen to the views of YCs, approaches should not feel “forceful”. This was

considered to be reflective of Hart's (2008) assertion that the top rung on the ladder of participation should not be viewed as the highest level of participation, instead CYP should be enabled to engage with confidence at different levels, it was reflected that this may be achieved through considering "space and place". This perhaps raises ethical considerations which should be carefully considered such as taking time to ensure that the CYP have an understanding of informed consent. For example,

- Does the CYP know who they are working with? Do they have information about their role?
- Do they have an informed understanding of implications of sharing/not sharing their views?
- How are they being asked to contribute?
- Do they have previous experiences of sharing their views? How was this experienced by the CYP? Did they feel that their views had been represented?
- Do they know who will be representing their view?

5. Summary, implications for practice and further research

This thesis adds to the body of literature regarding practice relating to seeking and listening to the views of YCs. A summary of the analysis and discussion is provided to address the three research questions. Implications for practice and possibilities for future research are tentatively discussed throughout as it is recognised that this thesis does not seek to offer an "absolute truth" (Burr, 2015) but instead aims to capture the essence of what was shared by four professionals at a particular point in

time using the “Discovery” and “Dream” stages of the AI cycle (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005).

5.1. RQ 1. How are Young Carers constructed by support services?

Table 11 includes themes and subthemes which correspond with research question one.

Table 11

RQ1 corresponding themes and subthemes

| Corresponding themes and subthemes |
|--|
| Language and identity |
| Being culturally and community responsive; They were a hidden army; Is there a shared understanding? |

5.1.1. Language and identity

Findings suggest that the term “YC” cannot be considered a fixed identity in an unchanging social world (Scwandt, 2003), it can be actively negotiated through social processes, relations and through language (Burr, 2015). Arguably, cultural discourse and constructions surrounding YCs may have implications for participation.

Participants in this study reported complexities surrounding constructions, for example, it was highlighted that some CYP do not self-identify as being a YC and others may not know that they are a YC.

Analysis emphasised the importance of taking time to understand the child and families’ constructions, beliefs, and values regarding caring. However, it was highlighted that this should be balanced with ensuring that the rights of the child are maintained. This accords with Phelps (2017) who discusses the “whole family” approach (Department for Health, 2017) whereby the voice of the YC and their family are considered along with legislation regarding the rights of the child.

As highlighted by Stenner (2014), there may be a need “to ‘unpack’ the umbrella grouping of YCs” (p. 73). Given the complexity of each person’s unique life experiences, it could be argued that it is appropriate to focus on cultural humility, showing an awareness while holding the individual’s experiences and their wishes central to interaction (Treisman, 2021).

Echoing suggestions by Pickup (2021) it is proposed that EPs may be well placed to explore what the caring role means to CYP and to listen to CYPs constructions regarding identity. EPs are practiced in utilising a repertoire of approaches, techniques, theories, and frameworks which can be drawn upon in individual work with CYP to understand their construing of identity, for example personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1955). These practices enable opportunities to listen “intently to the individual situation to understand what this means for them in the context of their lives” (Doutre et al., 2013, p.39).

With regard to constructions of caring and childhood, this research accords with Pickup (2020) who suggests that there is a role for the EP in facilitating engagement at the level of the microsystem and mesosystem, to work with schools and services in developing further understanding of the intricacies of caring.

In keeping with existing literature, it is suggested that there is a role for professionals to challenge “stigmatising and pathologizing discourses around [young carers] and disability” (Choudhury and Williams, 2020, p.254) through encouraging curiosity and questioning assumptions, which may open opportunities to enable dialogue.

This research provides some insight regarding how YCs are constructed; however, it is important to reiterate that YCs did not take part in this research. In keeping with

the focus on voice and participation, it is proposed that further research with CYP, families and professionals regarding constructions of young caring would be beneficial to understand their lived experiences. It is proposed that a further study with a larger sample could investigate the discourses of multi-agencies in relation to cultural constructions of caring and the potential influence this may have on participation in research and/or engagement with services.

5.2. RQ 2. What are support services experiences of listening to and hearing the voices of YCs?

RQ 3. How could support services, understand, represent and promote the views of YCs?

Due to the overlap between the “Discovery” and “Dream” stages which took place in the focus group discussion; research questions two and three are discussed together. Table 12 includes themes and subthemes which correspond with research questions two and three.

Table 12

RQ2 and RQ3 corresponding themes and subthemes

| Corresponding themes and subthemes |
|---|
| <p>Voice does not occur in a vacuum – a community around the family Opening a can of worms; Creating an environment for emotional safety; Multi-agency working and sharing practice.</p> |
| <p>The everyday magic – welcoming environments and approachable people Space and place matters; Relational factors; Trust and connection; That’s their voice, that’s their power.</p> |

5.2.1. Voice does not occur in a vacuum – a community around the family

Participants felt there had been an increase in awareness of the number of YCs known to education settings. They discussed experiences of capturing and listening

to YCs views through forums, community events, YC groups and projects which were considered to be “child-led”. However, it was suggested that there are a number of YCs who are not known to education settings. It was proposed that family concerns about “getting in trouble” (participant 2) with children’s services could be a factor which impacts on whether a CYPs’ caring responsibilities become known. Concerns regarding children’s services involvement were thought to present challenges in obtaining consent for YCs to participate in projects and interventions. It is possible that this has implications regarding “whose voice gets heard” (Mannay, 2016). For example, researchers and practitioners have an ethical responsibility to ensure informed consent when working with CYP. Consent is typically required from different stratas (Kay, 2019) such as, an “institutional gatekeeper” (e.g. ethics committee); “organisational gatekeeper” (e.g. a teacher or project lead) and a “guardian gatekeeper” (e.g. parents/carers). It is proposed that if families are concerned about the YC role becoming known to organisations, this may impact on access to hearing the views of children. This poses questions about voice and choice and potentially raises questions about how much power CYP are afforded in relation to their right to express their views on all matters that affect them (Article 12, UNCRC).

EPs have a role in promoting access and inclusion; Hardy and Hobbs (2017) highlight professional responsibilities to challenge “constructions of childhood that get in the way of participation” (p. 182). However, it is also important to recognise the duty to ensure non-maleficence and prevention from harm (Kay, 2019). It is proposed that this research offers further reflections on the ethical complexities involved when seeking to hear and represent the views of CYP.

Given that family concerns regarding children's services involvement is a predominant theme cited in existing literature (Banks et al., 2002; Bolas et al., 2007; Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Kennan et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2003) and has been further reiterated by participants in this research. It is argued that there is scope for further research regarding constructions about support services. It could be beneficial for action research to take place with YCs, families and services to provide "a platform to share views on [particular services], to evaluate and reflect on experiences of working with professionals" (Boswell et al., 2021, p.398). A similar approach to the methods implemented by Boswell et al. (2021) could be considered to develop a more nuanced understanding of constructions regarding services and support. This may also offer a space to explore dominant discourses.

It is proposed that in order to facilitate opportunities for participation, it may first important to understand how factors such as; stigma, language, beliefs and assumptions may impact or influence opportunities for participation (Joseph et al., 2020). EPs and services could work together at the level of the Mesosystem to develop a greater awareness of the social, political, and economic factors.

5.2.2. The everyday magic – welcoming environments and approachable people

Analysis indicated that support services have a range of strategies, approaches, interventions, and tools to enable dialogue with YCs and their families in order to hear their voices and to promote participation. Echoing Hardy and Hobbs (2017), participants emphasised the importance of finding ways to collaborate through a "genuine listening ethos" which involved warm, welcoming and safe environments. These factors were considered to facilitate connection, belonging and togetherness.

Relational approaches were discussed regarding connection between key adults and CYP but were also discussed with regard to the whole family. This corroborates with existing literature which suggests that for YCs to feel supported, it is also important to ensure that the cared for person receives support (Choudhury and Williams, 2020; Moore and McArthur 2007; Moore et al., 2009).

Participants highlighted the role of key and available adults in offering “reassurance” and taking time to understand individual circumstances. This reflects Rogerian principles for example, acceptance, empathy, and genuineness (Rogers, 1951). These approaches were considered important to re-enforce connections, to increase trust and to “mediate concerns” (Choudhury and Williams, 2020, p.250). Participants emphasised the importance of taking time to understand the environment, culture and attitudes within the family system and within the community (Aston and Lambert, 2010) to develop bespoke practical and emotional support. This was thought to potentially bolster engagement in projects and contribute toward trust.

Given the emphasis on relationships, connection and trust throughout the analysis, it may be important to reflect on the role of the EP with regard to individual work. For example, as highlighted by a participant in research by Newton and Smillie (2020), “when I as an EP meet a child for the first time, I am a stranger, to that person, why on earth should they want to talk to me about things that are emotionally charged for them, why would I ever expect that they’d want to” (P6 cited in Smillie and Newton, 2020, p. 337). Individual casework comprises a fundamental role for the EP (Ryrie, 2006) in addition, supporting organisations can be considered a key contribution in the repertoire of effective EP practice. This support can enable

opportunities to consider YCs development as part of a wider system (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). It has been proposed that EPs could contribute to multi/inter-agency working, for example, through personal construct psychology, systemic thinking, staff training, supervision and consultation (Greenhouse, 2013; Pickup, 2021). This may enable opportunities to view the YC in the context of their lives.

It may also be important to continue to be aware of the power in what is left “unsaid”, for example when a CYP shares that they do not want to work with a particular professional/service or take part in research. Gersch et al. (2017), proposes that there is room to go deeper with approaches to listening and hearing to promote participation and empowerment for all CYP. This may involve being more attuned to what is left “unsaid”.

5.2.3. Space and place matters

In addition, findings highlighted a call to consider what is meant by participation. Hardy and Hobbs (2017) propose that participation has a much wider meaning and can incorporate CYPs active contributions in different aspects of their life. In this research, active contribution was described through participant accounts of YCs joining groups with their family through events in the community. They also emphasised the value in listening to voice which occurs “naturally when they’re busy doing other things” (Participant 3). Agency was discussed regarding participation in activities that are meaningful and bring joy and fun to YCs.

This is in keeping with research by Percy-Smith (2006) who refers to the process of “community learning” suggesting that formal and informal environments can raise opportunities to listen to different views and to understand different experiences.

He suggests that there is a call for reflection on spaces for participation and to consider possible power relationships which can exist in particular environments. It is proposed that findings in this research therefore raise questions regarding the spaces support services use when meeting and working with CYP. For example, how much choice do CYP have over the space in which they meet with adults? Arguably the analysis highlights that there may be scope for research concerning EP practice in “natural spaces”.

Although findings may suggest that active engagement in different environments has potential to stimulate autonomy, agency and self-determination (Deci and Ryan, 2012). Analysis highlighted a need to consider whether the formal and informal relational spaces for participation are inclusive for all YCs. Participants reported a need consider practical support to ensure that there is equality of access to opportunity. For example, one participant reported that funding had been secured to enable opportunities to develop projects and groups in the community. In addition, access to travel arrangements were discussed.

This finding is in keeping with research by Barry (2011) and Thomas et al. (2003) who suggested that some YCs are disadvantaged in relation to their social life due to restrictions such as transport, finance, or limited time. This can be considered an important finding as much of the research to date has been carried out with those who attend projects. Although researchers may make efforts to reach YCs in groups and in education settings, there may be a number of CYP who may not practically be able to attend research opportunities.

5.2.4. Creating an environment for emotional safety

The analysis highlighted the emotional support provided to CYP and their families. Those in safeguarding roles discussed the emotional aspects of their work for example, reassuring families, and maintaining connections. With regard to psychological theory the concept of containment was referred to (Bion, 1983). It is possible that participants were describing a process of holding concerns and managing feelings and then handing them back in a way which feels more tolerable (Ellis, 2018). It is proposed that EPs are well placed to offer inter-professional supervision to staff members using a “container contained” approach (Ellis, 2021). It is argued that this approach may provide a space to “make sense of the complex issues they face and bear the feelings they encounter” (Ellis, 2021).

Moreover, participants highlighted that the focus group had provided a space to “share good practice”. It is proposed that there may be future possibilities for AI in working with services to explore the “best of what is” with a view to exploring “what might be”. This could be facilitated through group consultation which may enable multi-agency professionals to gain support from a group, inviting them to become curious observers of one another’s position (Hanko, 1999).

6. Strengths of the research

6.1. Methodology and findings

It is possible that this study makes a unique contribution to existing literature due to the methodological approach of AI taken. The researcher is not aware of any other studies regarding the voice of YCs which has adopted an AI approach. Moreover, the

use of AI was considered a strength in producing insightful responses regarding the research questions.

Participants discussed the possibility of meeting again via a focus group and the AI approach appeared to be regarded positively. For example, Participant 1 reported “there is a lot of good practice being shared here today”. There appeared to be an appreciation of “what is working well” and participants took opportunities to ask one another questions about practice with a view to developing approaches in their own settings e.g. “a family day” (Participant 2).

During the focus group participants discussed the prospect of potentially meeting in the future to share practice and collaborate. It is possible that the positive and appreciative nature of AI had contributed to the momentum for change (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005).

Although this research sought to explore multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the voices of YCs, arguably this thesis contributes to the wider body of literature regarding CYPs’ voice and participation.

6.2. Impact of Covid-19 and conducting research on an online platform

Conducting a focus group via an online platform potentially increased opportunities to bring different professionals together from a wider geographical area. This may have been less practical if the research was conducted “in person” (Steward and Shamdasani, 2017).

6.3. Participants

Professionals with a range of experiences and backgrounds took part in the research. It is proposed that this allowed for an exploration of different perspectives and experiences.

7. Limitations of the research

7.1. Methodology and findings

Similarly to limitations highlighted by Morris and Atkinson (2018), TA has potential to be considered at odds with AI as the analysis took place outside the focus group. Member checking may have provided opportunities to verify the researcher's interpretation. However, it is argued that the researcher sought to interpret information which was shared within the focus group at a particular time. Consistent with the social constructionist lens adopted it was not the intention to seek a universal truth but to be curious about participants' perceptions of "the best of what is" and "what might be". It is acknowledged that the data may be subject to multiple interpretations.

7.2. Impact of Covid-19 and conducting research on an online platform

Although there were perceived benefits to using an online platform, the researcher noticed that there appeared to be less flow in conversations and there was a need for the researcher to prompt more frequently during the larger group. However, it is important to note that the researcher considered possible power dynamics when designing the research and therefore factored in the use break out rooms with a view to create further opportunities for discussion (Toner, 2009).

Due to circumstances such as Covid-19, illness and work commitments, participants who had initially expressed interest were no longer able to take part in the research. The researcher held in mind that schools and services were under different pressures relating to Covid-19 and it was important to offer flexibility when organising dates and times for the focus group.

7.3. Participants

Due to challenges with recruitment, the current research was limited to a small sample. The intention of the research analysis was not to be representative of all professionals as this would not be congruent with the AI approach taken or the social constructionist lens adopted (Burr, 2015).

During the analysis social services/children's services were discussed on a number of occasions and have been mentioned in previous research (Choudhury and Williams, 2020). In hindsight it may have been beneficial to include other professional groups such as social workers as the aim was to explore multi-agency perspectives.

YCs did not take part in this research. It is argued that further opportunities for participatory action research would provide opportunities to add further insight. Working with YCs could provide a space to address both moral and ethical commitment and would also help to add to the validity and representativeness of what has been researched.

8. Conclusion

This research took an approach informed by AI to gather multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the voice of YCs. It sought to explore how YCs are

constructed by support services. It also highlighted existing practices around hearing the voices of YCs with a view to consider future possibilities for listening to and representing their views (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). It is argued that these areas have been addressed through the research and tentative implications for practice and future research have been highlighted.

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**An Appreciative Inquiry: Multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the
voice of Young Carers**

Part 3

Word Count: 8,954

Critical Appraisal

1. Introduction

The critical appraisal offers a reflexive and reflective account of my research journey and my development as a researcher. The appraisal is presented in two parts. The first section includes the rationale for this thesis research and seeks to tell a story about how this thesis was shaped through interactions with systems. It also includes reflections on challenges that were faced which ultimately led to deeper inquiry, curiosity and consideration of the ontological and epistemological lens taken and methods adopted. The second part includes an appraisal of the research process, including theoretical assumptions, methodology, recruitment, and data analysis. Reflections regarding contribution to knowledge and possibilities for dissemination are also discussed.

Part 3 of the thesis is written in first person as it is an account of my position within the research, and it provides an insight into the effects of my own practice (self-reflexivity) (Burnham, 2005). The critical appraisal is therefore viewed as an opportunity to reflect on my embedded role and the ways in which I have been affected by the systems I have interacted with throughout the research (Pellegrini, 2009).

2. Part A: Critical appraisal of the research journey and the positioning of the researcher

2.1. Inception of the research

Interest in the thesis research area came from my experiences of working with YCs in an early intervention service and within a pastoral role prior to starting the doctorate in educational psychology. In addition, as a TEP, I worked with YCs and I

noticed that requests for educational psychology service (EPS) involvement did not always include information about the CYP being a YC. However, there were occasions where information about caring responsibilities were shared when working with CYP or in consultation with their parents/carers or key adults.

In one LA placement, initial planning meetings enquired about the number of known YCs in schools. I recalled being interested when some schools reported the number of YCs on roll, but this was sometimes accompanied with the caveat that there are CYP who “might be YCs” but are not known to the school. I became curious about how YCs are identified and wondered about the EP role in supporting YCs and systems around them.

An initial scope of research relating to YCs took place at a time when Covid-19 restrictions were in place in Wales, at this time I wondered about YCs’ experiences of support services and education during the stay-at-home period. I was made aware of research which was carried out by the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, entitled Coronavirus and Me (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2020). CYP who took part in the study reported that there had been changes to their experiences of education, social opportunities, and access to support in light of Covid-19 restrictions. Findings highlighted that although access to social opportunities had been limited due to lockdown measures, some CYP reported positive experiences. Positive experiences included, being able to spend more time with family members, learning new skills and a reduction on social and health care pressures. Although the Coronavirus and Me research (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2020) is not exclusively related to

YCs, findings prompted me to think about the experiences of YCs and how their views are heard and represented.

Throughout my career I have placed central importance on seeking to hear and to represent children's views. Listening to the voices of CYP is a fundamental role in EP practice (Gersch et al., 2017) and during my time on the doctorate, I became curious about different ways of facilitating participation. I also became interested in how EPs promote genuine collaboration to engage CYP in meaningful planning and to minimise adult misrepresentation (Todd, 2000).

2.2. Positioning

Sikes (2006) proposed that "ideally people work on research which, in all its dimensions, accords with their beliefs and values and which matches their philosophical position/s" (p.107). However, given my previous experiences of working with YCs I recognised that preconceptions could have an impact on my approach to research for example, researcher bias. Corlette and Mavin (2018) discuss the importance of research positionality in qualitative research and although I was not an "insider" as I do not consider myself to have been a YC, it was important to reflect on my position of "experience near" (Anderson, 2002). Finlay (2008) discusses the value of the researcher making efforts to be aware of and "rein in the influence of preunderstandings" (p.5) to ensure that the analysis can reveal fresh insights. Similarly, Mannay (2010) describes taking "deliberate cognitive effort to question taken for granted assumptions" (p. 138). Researcher reflexivity was therefore important, and a research journal was used to aid reflection. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that an individual may become more aware of and begin to

understand pre-conceptions when immersed in the process of interpretation, as such, I was mindful to keep an ongoing record of reflections, emotions, and preconceptions. Nevertheless, Greig et al. (2013) propose that there are values in researcher enthusiasm, and Sikes (2006) posits that when research is congruent with the beliefs and values of the researcher they can “believe in what they are doing and maintain their integrity” (p.107). With this in mind, a reflective account of the research journey is included as the journey had a pertinent role in my decision making. Moreover, it is proposed that the research journey can be regarded as a contribution to knowledge in relation to the participation of YCs in research.

2.3. Looking beyond the surface to construct something new

My thesis research initially sought to gain the views of YCs regarding their experiences of Covid-19 restrictions, including experiences of education and support. To inform my approach to research I reviewed literature which included participatory approaches with YCs (Doutre et al., 2013; McAndrew et al., 2012; Skovdal et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2003). I also explored qualitative approaches used in EP practice to obtain and represent CYP’s views (Newton and Smillie, 2020; Hardy and Hobbs, 2017). Through engaging with the literature, I noticed that YCs were referred to as a “hidden” or “hard to reach” population (Bjorgvinsdottir and Halldorsdottir, 2014; Kennan et al., 2012; Stamatopoulos, 2015). In light of this, I wanted to provide varied opportunities and “methods that enable voices to be heard” (Hardy and Hobbs 2017, p.182). I therefore proposed a two-phased approach utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods. Methods included surveys, photo elicitation interviews, visual productions, and person-centred planning tools

(Sanderson, 2002). Despite my research design and efforts to reach out to schools, projects and services, I recognised that I was experiencing similar challenges to those cited in the existing research regarding recruitment (Barry, 2011; Kennan et al. 2012). I started to reflect on the unanticipated information I was receiving through contact with support services and became curious about the “silence” I was experiencing. I began taking cues from the process of the research (Merz, 2002) to develop different approaches. Key reflections from my research journey are provided below.

2.4. Access to participants

Meyer (2007) discusses the position of young people (YP) in research and argues that the notion of innocence conflates the physical state of children with vulnerability. I felt that this assertion was particularly interesting to consider relating to the initial stages of my research. During the recruitment phase, some gatekeepers shared perspectives on the need to “protect” YCs. In one instance concerns were shared regarding the vulnerability of YCs and there was apprehension about the ethics of interviewing CYP who have caring responsibilities. I became interested in this discourse and reflected on constructions of YCs potentially being viewed as individuals who need “protecting”, I also considered the role of the gatekeeper and their power to act on the behalf of CYP.

O’Reilly and Dogra (2017) suggest that there are different lenses which adults can take when considering CYPs participation in research, the first is the “libertarian” which refers to CYP having the right to freely voice their experiences and views; the second is referred to as the “protectionist”, whereby adults have a role in

interjecting in order to safeguard the CYP; and the third is the “parentalist”, where the adult is a decision maker until the CYP reaches adulthood. Furthermore, Kay (2019) reports that terms such as “access” and “safeguarding” are frequently cited in research concerning CYP, and the gatekeeper role is typically described a “protector” and “decision maker” regarding whether research can be undertaken with those who they are responsible for.

When considering the nested systems involved in working with CYP who are described as vulnerable, Kay (2019) suggests that there is a need to “seek consent from each strata before seeking informed consent from the individual” (p.34) and this led to further ethical considerations for this thesis research. It is suggested that there are tensions when considering the role of the gatekeeper. For example, on one hand they have a responsibility to protect CYP from potential harm and on the other they seek to support children’s agency and may be guided by the principles of The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Kay, 2019).

Hobbs and Hardy (2017) discuss the role of the EP in “promoting wider understanding of participation that goes beyond “having a say” and supporting children’s right to expression so that they develop the ability to articulate their views and make decisions” (p. 182). I therefore reflected on the need to facilitate opportunities to connect with gatekeepers, offer visits where possible and to take an approach to understand their expressed concerns to enable dialogue (Gameson and Rhydderch, 2008).

2.5. Power and choice

Although the ethical principles of non-maleficence and doing no harm is fundamental to research (Kay, 2019), I wondered whether concerns relating to “protection” may be factors leading to some voices being underrepresented or under researched due to difficulties relating to access. I began to ask myself,

- Who decides on the voices that can come forward in research?
- Who has permission to access the voices of YCs?
- How are voices accessed? and are some methods deemed more favourable than others?

Research by McAndrew et al. (2012), included a theme “excluded from being included”. In their research the theme was related to a lack of age-appropriate communication between professionals and CYP, for example the use of “professional” language. However, the heading “excluded from being included” also struck me as being important when considering the difficulties I experienced recruiting participants. I reflected that it is possible that there are certain voices that may be heard more frequently than others and I wondered whether there were CYP who are inadvertently “excluded from being included”, such as those who have not been formally identified as having a caring role or those who are considered to be too young or too vulnerable to participate.

2.6. Reflections on working with gatekeepers

For my initial research, there was a need to ensure that my proposal was sent to “institutional gatekeepers” (Kay, 2019) (Cardiff University Ethics Committee).

Authorisation for the research to take place was granted and following ethical

approval I contacted a range of “organisational gatekeepers” including head teachers, YC project leads and youth service managers. Brooks et al. (2014) propose that this is a stage where the gatekeeper may grant access for research information to be shared with prospective participants, or they may deny opportunities for participants to take part.

In June 2021 I returned to the “institutional gatekeeper” (Ethics Committee) to seek permission to visit YC projects as it was highlighted by gatekeepers that visiting groups may be an opportunity to share my research and to meet CYP directly. In keeping with the literature relating to building a therapeutic alliance (Rogers, 1951), I felt that this would be a beneficial approach to develop rapport and begin to address potential power imbalances which could be present between myself and CYP.

Attendance at YC groups could also provide an opportunity for an introduction meeting and a space to consider different levels of participation that CYP may want to engage in (Hart, 1992). The process of submitting amendments to my proposal took place over the summer period of 2021. At this time, it was important that I offered transparency and I made it clear to gatekeepers that I would need approval to visit their settings. Ethical approval was granted in the autumn term of 2021, and this was communicated to gatekeepers. However, I did not receive invitations to visit settings at this time. I reflected on the space and the “silence” which existed and wondered whether time may have had an impact upon intention and ability to engage with the research process. For example, it was initially proposed that attending projects could take place over the summer period, however I was aware that CYP had since returned to school. It is also important to note that the impact of

Covid-19 had potential to disrupt the research further as discussion of a “firebreak” lockdown was circulating in the media.

Kay (2019) also discusses Bryman’s (2016) theory that gatekeeping is also a “political process” (p. 40), and gatekeepers may be aware of how their organisation or service may be represented in research. This was something I spent time reflecting on in supervision. I recognised that I had sought to research YCs’ experiences, specifically their experiences of education and support and wondered how this research may have landed with gatekeepers given that the research was being conducted at a time of significant change for services. I was aware that there had been changes to the delivery of education and support during lockdown and that I could potentially be viewed as an outsider seeking to look in on a possibly challenging time.

2.7. Parental consent

Given the age of prospective participants I was aware that I needed to ensure “guardian gatekeeper” consent (those with legal parental responsibility) (Kay, 2019). The interaction between the “organisational” and “guardian gatekeeper” was a particular area of interest which I frequently returned to in my research journal and in supervision. I considered the challenges that may be present when seeking to gain consent from parents/carers of YCs for example, when the parent is unwell or when there are concerns regarding service involvement (Phelps, 2017).

I also considered possible power relations and the concept of choice in relation to my recruitment strategy. For example, I had made a research poster which included information about the focus of the research. However, in ensuring ethical responsibility and seeking appropriate consent, the posters were addressed to

parents/guardians. This brought about a tension as I reflected that the poster was an invitation for CYP to take part but was written to the adults around them. I wondered whether this could have limited opportunities for participation; for example, prospective participants may have wanted to share their experiences but may have wanted their participation to be confidential. This was an interesting reflection when considering the rights of the child and ethical responsibilities. I referred to literature by Becker (1995 p.29) who discusses that YCs should have the right,

- To self-determination (to be children, carers or both).
- To be recognised and treated separately from the care receiver.
- To be heard, listened to and believed.
- To privacy and respect.
- To be consulted and fully involved in discussions about decisions which effect their lives and the lives of their family.

Phelps (2017) notes that although there are benefits to participation, researchers must carefully consider the family situation. Phelps proposes that family situations are changeable, and researchers should consider whether research could be harmful at the point of involvement.

2.8. Consultation fatigue

A number of services reported that some YCs had already taken part in research and therefore the research information would not be distributed to them. I reflected on this in supervision as I became interested in tensions between power dynamics of adults and children and their access to opportunity. Kay (2019) proposes that there

are times when gatekeepers negate opportunities for prospective participants “to have the right to refuse consent or assent” (Kay 2019, p.45). However, I wondered whether such decisions may mean that some CYP are “excluded from being included”.

I also received a number of responses from gatekeepers who reported that some YCs had shared that they were “frustrated”, “annoyed” or “reluctant” to share their experiences as previous participation had not contributed to changes in their lives or they had not seen outcome or “impact” of the research. This accords with Phelps (2017) who suggests that timely feedback is important and if feedback is not offered it can be discouraging for CYP. This feedback was particularly important when considering the direction that my research took. A reflection from my research diary is provided in Table 13,

Table 13

Extract from research diary

“I’m wondering about consultation fatigue. My aim is to hear the voices of YCs about their experiences of something I believe will be significant, however, I’m now curious about who this research is significant for. Are the intentions of my research landing with the people I hoped to speak to? It is interesting that young people have contributed to research which possibly illustrates that they would like their contributions to be heard and understood, however there is a possible reluctance or frustration to take part in further research because there is perceived limited information about “outcomes” or “impact”. I want to take some time to think about whether research is represented in a way that feels meaningful or illustrative of what they have taken the time to share. How can I ensure that participation is fed back to CYP in a meaningful way? I want to take a step back and think about what researchers do with research. How is research disseminated? Although my intention is to listen, to hear and to increase CYPs’ participation, are young people feeling heard? What do we hear and pay attention to as researchers? What can be acted upon? Is there enough transparency in research and in practice about what has been heard and what we can act on? Earnshaw (2014) says that refusal can invite adults to change their approaches and challenge expectations, however, I wonder whether changing approaches is enough. When I think of my role as a TEP this raises important ethical considerations about what happens when CYP do not want to work with us, or when they share that they have already spoken to several adults” (Date 10.02.2022).

2.9. Relevance of research

Over time, I began to wonder about the relevance of my research and perhaps whether it was felt to be a priority for those I was reaching out to. Saleh and Bista (2017) suggest that there is a correlation between a prospective participants interest in the research topic and return rates. The limited interest from prospective participants coupled with a gap in the extant literature could suggest that my research may not have been an area of priority and/or gatekeepers and YCs may not have had the capacity to engage with the research process at the time (Covid-19). It is also possible that consultation fatigue existed. Moreover, CYP were negotiating the return to school following disruptions over the past two years due to the pandemic.

It is important to note that this section of the thesis includes hypotheses and is not intended to represent truth, however these reflections are included in order to depict my curiosity and wonderings about what goes on in systems when carrying out research and some of the complexities encountered.

2.10. Development of the current thesis

Throughout the journey I introduced methods which I felt may lead to greater participation, I reached out to different services and organisations and despite changes to the research and ongoing communication with support services there were ongoing difficulties with recruitment. Further discussions took place with my supervisor considering the following questions:

- Am I engaging with CYP in a way that feels meaningful to them?

- Are my questions the questions CYP want to answer?
- What are the possible facilitators and barriers to participation?

There came a pivotal moment and a shift in direction. While engaging with literature and reflecting on experiences I started to ask myself “who wants to be heard? And how do they want to be heard?”. I wondered whether references to “hidden populations” or “hard to reach groups” could perhaps be an invitation to take the research outward to consider the voices that were being heard and represented (gatekeepers). There was recognition in the extant literature, that CYP who typically took part in research were members of support groups or projects (Bjorgvinsdottir and Halldorsdottir, 2014; Kennan et al., 2012; Stamatopoulos, 2015). It was important to note that the voices that have been heard have been central to shaping practice, and therefore I wanted to hold in mind the value of the current representation of YCs in research. I wondered about an approach which could be taken to capture the “best of what is” with a view to looking forward to “what might be” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). For example, what has worked well to date when capturing the views of CYP? how can this be developed further? What do services, education settings and researchers need to know?

2.11. Summary

This section of the thesis has provided key reflections regarding the interactions which can occur when working in and between different systems. It highlights some of the ethical tensions that can be encountered and some of the messy processes of real-world research. Curtis et al. (2004) propose that “airbrushing out the problems of research may occur as a result of pressure on length of journal articles,

professional pride or a disinclination for well-trained, careful researchers to admit to difficulties” (p.168). I decided that it was important to include a summary of the reflexive and reflective position adopted. I likened the process to riding the ebb and flow of waves, there were times where I was hopeful that I had understood the extant literature and voices shared by those working with YCs to inform my research. However, attempts to amend my research were met with new challenges.

My experiences paired with the extant literature ultimately led to the final research. I feel that the shift in perspective demonstrated active listening to those around the child, modelling that I was attending to nuances in what was being said by gatekeepers and responding. Similarly, to the concept of emergent design (Merz, 2002) I felt it was important to ensure that my research did not close “off the possibility of being surprised by whatever else there is to be noticed... a finer focus [emerged] only as the study progress[ed]” (Ely et al. 1997, p.237 as cited in Merz, 2002). In addition, responsiveness, and the ability to take cues from data is consistent with Yardley’s (2000) principles of demonstrating “commitment and rigour” and “sensitivity to context”.

3. Part B: Appraisal of the research process, contribution to knowledge and dissemination.

3.1. Literature review

The literature search was considered a difficult task, this was in part due to changes to the scope and design of the thesis. An initial literature search took place in November 2020. At this time my research was focused on gaining the views of CYP in a caring role specifically relating to experiences of Covid-19 restrictions. Further

searches took place between March and July 2021 and additional searches took place at intervals throughout the process to include search terms relevant to the thesis (Appendix A).

Initially a systematic literature review was considered, however there was a scarcity in research relating to the search terms and very few papers were found relating to EPs' work with YCs. Although there was a dearth in literature from an EP perspective, I was able to find literature from a range of disciplines including, social work, social psychology, and youth work. I therefore included research from a range of disciplines to acknowledge the wider contribution to knowledge. Consequently, I decided to conduct a narrative review which seeks to explore the dialogue in existing literature, while "filling in gaps and extending prior studies" (Creswell, 2009, p.28). This helped to develop a deeper understanding (Green et al., 2006) and allowed me to consider the wider legislative, historical, theoretical, and contextual information. The literature review was one of the most challenging experiences as it was difficult to select relevant papers from a wide range of literature while also ensuring that I included the breadth of relevant theoretical frameworks. I recognised that it was beyond the scope of the thesis to provide in depth reviews of each theoretical underpinning relating to YCs, participation, social constructions, and identity. Instead, I aimed to synthesise findings from a range of sources to provide the reader with the contextual and legislative background. Moreover, given that the thesis sought to centralise the voice of the child, the review included research which had directly involved CYP. Similarly to Thematic Analysis (TA), I organised the literature

review into sections which represented my “interpretations of patterns of meaning across the [literature]” (Byrne, 2022, p.1393).

Note: Further information regarding my search strategy and review of the literature can be found in Appendix A and B.

3.2. Worldview (ontology and epistemology)

At the beginning of the research journey, I felt that the research was being guided by the approach therefore taking a more pragmatic position (Robson, 2011). I initially considered a critical realist paradigm, however I felt that an ontological position of realism was not fitting as it proposes a “truth” irrespective of whether it is observed (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). I felt that this position had potential to lose the essence of participants individual and shared accounts. Moreover, critical realism did not appear to represent the complexity of understanding of how YCs’ voices have been heard and represented, the intricacies regarding identity and the interacting factors that were identified in the literature. I recognised that I was interested in the individual and the “collective generation of meaning” (Crotty 1998, p.58). Therefore, the ontological position of relativism was considered to fit most comfortably with the research, alongside an epistemological position of social constructionism as the research was seeking to explore how knowledge was being “constructed through interactions between people” (Robson, 2011).

Eatough and Smith (2021) describe social constructionism as being comprised of sociocultural and historical processes which contribute to how life is experienced and understood. They note that language, intersubjective communication and the stories that people tell are important factors relating to their sense of self. Social

constructionism was therefore deemed to be congruent with my research rationale which aimed to explore how YCs are constructed. I was also interested in exploring multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the voices of YCs. A Social Constructionist position was considered appropriate to allow a space to acknowledge that each individual may “construct many different, sometimes conflicting, but equally convincing “truths or ‘realities’” (Gameson and Rhydderch, 2008). I took the position that although there may be different truths and realities, “there is usually some shared meaning between people” (Fox, Martin and Green 2007, p.16).

3.3. Participants and sample size

Despite contacting 12 Educational Psychology Services, 42 YC support services/projects/organisations, 50 education settings and sharing a research poster on social media platforms, I did not receive a large amount of interest. I reflected that “No matter how carefully one plans in advance, research is designed in the course of its execution” (O’Gorman, 2001, in Toner, 2009 p.181).

Interest was expressed by eight prospective participants. Initially I decided that I would run two focus groups of four participants. Time was taken to consider the composition of the groups. Braun and Clarke (2013) discuss that there are some researchers who propose that “heterogeneity is good; it brings different views and produces a more diverse discussion. Others argue that homogeneity is good, as it creates an easy or familiar social environment, meaning participants feel more comfortable and start from a similar place” (Liamputtong, 2011 in Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.114). Although there was some level of homogeneity as all participants were

required to have/had experience of working with a CYP who they consider to be a YC. It was recognised that there were also significant differences between participants including their profession, where they worked geographically and the length of time they had been working with YCs. Although not specifically related to focus groups with multi-agencies, Braun and Clarke (2013) discuss the inclusion of friends, acquaintances and strangers in groups and refer to advantages and disadvantages relating to different compositions. These factors were considered when weighing up the composition of my focus group. For example, an advantage of having a separate group for each profession is the degree of familiarity the group may have with each other. They may have some insider knowledge and may feel more comfortable to request elaboration and/or challenge particular viewpoints (Braun and Clarke, 2013). However, a disadvantage may be an assumed or shared knowledge which could lead to things being left unsaid (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It was decided that including a range of perspectives had potential to add a richness to the conversations. I decided that including professionals from different backgrounds may provide a platform to explore “the best of what is” from different perspectives adding to potential co-construction of meaning. The final number of participants in the study was four due to unforeseen circumstances which included illness and work commitments. This meant that only one focus group took place.

Throughout the research process I was concerned that the sample size was too small for the nature of a doctoral thesis. However, upon reflection, the sample size represents the journey undertaken and speaks to rationale which led to the final research proposal. It also relates to the reflective questions I held in mind, “who

wants to be heard? How do they want their voices to be heard?” and “How can I listen deeper?” as opposed to the question “how many voices can I listen to?”

Moreover, Yardley (2008) proposes that when carrying out qualitative research the researcher should ask the question “how is it possible to demonstrate [that this] qualitative study has been carried out to a high standard and generated useful knowledge?” (p.295). Yardley’s framework (Table 14) was therefore used to consider the validity and reliability of the analysis.

Table 14

Research validity and reliability

| Core principle | Evidence of researcher practice |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Sensitivity to context</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with existing literature, ongoing reflection, and changes to the approach to research. • Reflexivity and sensitivity to cultural context. • Addressing a gap in knowledge. This included awareness of existing research, findings and arguments made which are relevant (Yardley, 2008). For example, considering how to reach those who may be considered “seldom heard” and how to become more responsive in order to “hear” and represent CYP. From the extant |

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|--|--|
| | <p>literature, there was not a clear consensus on how we do this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying strengths in the extant research and highlighting areas for further exploration (Literature review and Appendix B).• A focus on how YCs' views have been elicited and what is known about YCs.• Ethical considerations and continued responsiveness to feedback as the research journey evolved.• Ethical approval was granted by Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee.• Three groups of professionals were invited to take part. This decision was made in response to the findings of previous research and feedback from gatekeepers.• Open ended questions were designed to allow for participants to share their views and experiences and break out rooms were used for paired discussions. |
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|-------------------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitivity was also demonstrated during the analysis through interaction with the data. Appendix K illustrates steps in the analysis, how meaning making took place and the interactive process, including how interpretation was framed. |
| <p>Commitment and rigour</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the most appropriate approach given the context of Covid-19. It was decided that research should be conducted using an interactive communicative platform. • I explored a range of methods before deciding on the approach to the research. • Data analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2021a) six step RTA (see Appendix K). • Although an inductive approach was used, I acknowledge that prior knowledge and the research journey undertaken meant that the research cannot be truly inductive (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). • Initial themes and subthemes were shared and reflected upon with my research supervisor. |

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|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular supervision took place to further explore decisions taken throughout the research and to ensure approaches were informed and reasoned (Gameson and Rhydderch, 2008). • A research journal was maintained to record reflections, initial thoughts, wonderings, and research activities which took place. Information from the journal informed the development of part 3 of the thesis. |
| <p>Transparency and coherence</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear illustration of the steps undertaken are included in the appendices and throughout the thesis. In addition, the critical appraisal describes and demonstrates reflective and reflexive practice. • Gatekeeper letters were produced and distributed to provide information about the research (Appendix C, D and E). • An information sheet was sent to gatekeepers, participants, and prospective participants (Appendix G). |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief information was read aloud to participants at the end of the focus group and was sent to them via email (Appendix J). |
| <p>Impact and importance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact and importance of this research is highlighted through implications for practice. Implications are discussed in the analysis and discussion. • This research contributes to knowledge regarding how YCs are constructed. It also contributes to the body of literature regarding the voices of YCs who may be typically underrepresented in research or are referred to as “hidden” or “seldom heard”. Tentative considerations are provided in part 2 regarding how YCs are being heard and represented, along with possibilities for eliciting, promoting, and representing their voice in the future. • This research contributes to literature regarding voice and participation. |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions to knowledge are discussed below along with possibilities for dissemination. • The empirical paper highlights strengths and limitations of the research along with possibilities for future research. |
|--|--|

3.4. Data collection

3.4.1. Alternative methods of collection

As discussed, different methods were considered at the inception of the research. It is important to note that I had also considered analysing “naturally occurring data” (Burke and McNeill, 2021) due to challenges with participant recruitment. I contemplated analysing podcasts, social media content or forums and vlogs (Burke and McNeill, 2021). However, it was decided that this approach was not fitting with the intention of the research and felt that I was moving away from the rich data that was shaping the thesis. In addition, the approach raised ethical considerations which did not feel congruent with my positioning. For example, Kearney and Hyle (2004) describe the concept of auteur theory, which refers to the researcher listening to the maker of the image in order to gain an understanding of what they intended as opposed to researcher attempting to read the semiotics. Similarly, I felt that my interpretation of existing data, could risk of information being subject to new meaning resulting in passages, extracts or images possibly being construed beyond what the maker intended (Mannay, 2013). Brady and Brown (2013) note that

participants may decide that they no longer want their images included in the research or do not want to be represented by a fixed visual for “time immemorial” (p.102). However, it can be difficult to regain control of data once it has been included in a final research report or publication. Although, the social constructionist position of this research reflects a belief that there is no singular truth, the intention of this thesis research was to provide a means to explore with people. I felt that my motivation to analyse naturally existing data was reflective of attempts to adapt the research to listen where I could, however I was aware that I was moving away from the data I was receiving from the process of the research, and I wanted to ensure that I took time to listen deeper to those who wanted to contribute to the research. Importantly, I wanted to ensure that the research maintained the integrity of what I was setting out to achieve.

3.4.2. The focus group and online communicative platforms

Data collection took place on the online communicative platform Microsoft Teams. One of the strengths of taking this approach was that I was able to invite participants to take part in the research from across the UK and they could join the call from the comfort of their own location. In addition, Braun and Clarke (2013) propose that online participation has been reported to be comfortable, convenient and non-intrusive for some people. However, I did encounter some challenges with the dynamics in the group. At times conversations appeared to lose flow and I wondered whether this may be in part due to the focus group taking place on a communicative platform whereby there is the option to turn off microphones while others are speaking. This factor may have been due to my initial introduction as I mentioned

that switching off microphones between conversations may reduce feedback. I was curious about whether this had led to a reluctance to speak freely in the whole group forum. Nijstad and Stroebe (2006) suggest that a one-at-a-time speaking rule can have an impact on focus group discussions as individuals may forget their ideas while attending to and listening to another participant. I noticed that within the break-out rooms, participants who were perhaps quieter spoke for longer periods and there appeared to be some increase in the frequency of overlapping discussion. Toner (2009) suggests that dyads have the possibility of contributing to reduced hierarchy, which can add to a more relaxed intimate environment to converse. I had therefore factored this in through planned use of breakout rooms. In sum, it was felt that the benefits of the focus group outweighed the limitations. For example, one participant shared the value of having a forum to “share good practice”, and another participant commented that they would like to meet again in a group forum.

3.4.3. Strengths and limitations of Appreciative Inquiry

The AI approach was considered a strength of the research and was beneficial in gathering rich information concerning the research questions. Moreover, the intention of this research was not only to address the questions proposed but also to provide a space for reflection and to contribute toward change. During the focus group, participants commented on the “good practice” shared. Similarly, to research by Morris and Atkinson (2018) participants shared their everyday practice and information about what they were doing to build capacity. They also spoke about interventions and approaches that were already in place. Furthermore, two participants reported that they would like to continue discussions and work together

beyond the focus group. Arguably the platform had provided a space for empowerment particularly when sharing “the best of what is”.

It has been proposed that due to the solution-focused nature of AI, there is a risk that the approach may not allow for the exploration of challenges or problems (Grant and Humphries, 2006). Held (2004) suggests that “making lemonade out of life’s many lemons is certainly one way to make life meaningful, but it is surely not the only way” (p. 40). However, it is argued that the focus group did not negate from challenging or difficult experiences. An example of this can be seen in the subtheme “opening a can of worms”. It should be noted that during the focus group, I experienced a pull to reframe discussions which appeared to focus on the challenges. However, I reflected that the research was focused on hearing and listening to the people who had offered to share their voices and therefore it was important to ensure authentic appreciation (Fitzgerald et al., 2010). I attempted to be cautious not to deny difficulties, as I wanted to provide a space to discover what matters. This is in keeping with Grant and Humphries (2006) proposal for a wider definition of appreciation. Carter et al., (2016) describe a distinction between a “positive” stance and an “appreciative” stance. It is acknowledged that AI can be used to explore “the best of what is”, which can encourage positive discourse. However, there is value in “empathy for the whole person, not only that which we construe as positive” (Fitzgerald et al., 2010, p. 232). The approach is considered to have allowed participants opportunities to represent their own realities. However, I am also aware of the power differentials which exist through the design of the research, and I acknowledged that the questions posed may have had the potential to steer or impose discourses “in a manner reminiscent of the vast interpersonal

systems of control/power identified by Foucault” (Grant and Humphries 2006, p. 415).

A possible limitation of this research is that AI typically takes place in an organisation seeking change and the current participant population represented three different sectors. However, the focus of the current research did not extend beyond the “Discover” and “Dream” stages of the AI cycle and this is considered both a strength and limitation. The approach allowed for the sharing of “good practice” and for potential “blue sky thinking” and “best hopes” to be explored. However, consistent with research by Carr-Stewart and Walker (2003) the full potential for the trajectory of change was possibly restricted as the research did not go beyond the “Dream”. If research was to continue to the “Design” and “Destiny” stages, it would be important to consider that participants are from a range of organisations/settings and have varying backgrounds, therefore the approach may need adjusting to accommodate this. Tensions can exist when multi-agencies work together such as differences in timescales, a multiplicity of tools and practices and differences in guiding principles (Leadbetter et al., 2008). However, Engeström et al. (1999) suggests that such tensions and contradictions can be central to change.

3.5. Data analysis

When choosing the method of analysis, I referred to Braun and Clarke’s (2021b) discussion about taking an approach which avoids a “hallowed method quest” (p.45), to increase deliberate and thoughtful practice regarding what analysis is seeking to accomplish. As discussed, this thesis involved a journey and my choice of methods evolved over time. As a result of this journey, I sought an approach which would

encompass “subjectivity as a resource for research” (Braun and Clarke 2021b, p.39) with “meaning and knowledge as partial, situated and contextual” (Braun and Clarke 2021a, p.39). The method chosen for analysis, and which was felt to be fitting with the approach to the research was RTA (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). However, other qualitative approaches were considered. Specifically, I considered Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) as an approach during the inception of the research. I also became curious about Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2017). The processes and thinking which ultimately led to my decision to choose RTA are summarised in brief below. I have briefly highlighted the journey and methods considered and I would therefore like to acknowledge that each part of the journey and my engagement with the literature ultimately led to my decision, therefore reflecting the deliberate and thoughtful process undertaken.

On the surface, I wondered about whether IPA and RTA had some shared characteristics, both were seemingly well placed to explore the proposed research questions. I considered IPA as an approach for its strengths in seeking to understand how people make sense of the world (Smith et al., 2009), while also recognising the researchers own interactive and dynamic role within the research. Smith et al. (2009) describe “double hermeneutics” whereby the participant is making sense of their world while the researcher is involved in a process of making sense of the participants sense making. Eatough and Smith (2021) also describe the position of the researcher in taking an empathetic position and a curious and critical stance where they first attempt to walk alongside the participant and can then begin to “step back” and become curious about the information shared. I felt that this would

acknowledge the iterative process undertaken, recognising that it would not be possible to step away from the experiences of the research process and my past roles. I felt that IPA may allow me to become more aware of possible preconceptions and the importance of bracketing, otherwise described as the process whereby a researcher separates their preconceptions from what there is to discover (Smith et al., 2009). I also considered IPA for the level of depth included in the analysis. However, Braun and Clarke (2021b) note that there is generally a misconception that TA lacks the higher levels of interpretation afforded by IPA. The latent level of analysis involved in RTA meant that there was sufficient scope to delve into deeper levels of meaning, looking beyond the surface of what was said. In addition, the reflexive and reflective nature involved in RTA meant that there was opportunity to make sense of my own subjective positioning and the impact that this may have on the analysis. For example, a space to reflect on assumptions and how they may affect or shape coding (Braun and Clarke, 2021a).

Braun and Clarke (2021b) recommend that researchers could consider RTA instead of IPA where “the research question is focused on something other than (just) *personal* experience and sense-making” (Braun and Clarke 2021a, p. 42). Although the focus group provided a space to listen to the experiences of individuals, arguably the focus group explored something going on between people and systems. Therefore, RTA was considered appropriate as “the data source is something other than interviews or another method that gathers in-depth first-person accounts of personal experience and sense-making” (Braun and Clarke, 2021a, p.42). Although, it is important to note that Smith et al., (2009) and Palmer et al., (2010) have discussed the use of IPA for analysing focus groups, I felt that RTA allowed me to explore data

across participant accounts and in keeping with the AI approach, I was looking at how people were co-constructing meaning.

Moreover, IPA requires a fairly homogenous group (Smith et al, 2009). In keeping with the literature surrounding YCs, it is highlighted that YCs cannot be considered a homogenous group and their experiences of caring are vastly different (Gough and Gulliford, 2020). Participants roles and their work with CYP were also vastly different. In addition, Choudhury and Williams (2020) note that project workers and education staff members are not “living the experience of being a YC” (p.246). Braun and Clarke (2021b) propose that TA may be considered when “the analytic interest is on how personal experiences are located within wider socio-cultural contexts” (p.43).

Discourse Analysis (DA) (Willig, 2003) was also considered. I became interested in literature surrounding voices of CYP and the social action which could impact the ways in which people construct YCs, I also considered how research had included the voices of some YCs while the voices of others were considered “hidden”. I was curious about whether there may be some experiences, views and constructions that are dominant within the literature and therefore may have implications for practice.

I was initially drawn to Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2017) to explore the power of language and potential implications for social positioning (Billington, 1995). When considering the role of the gatekeeper, researchers and professionals, I became interested in the power differentials between people. Moreover, I was interested in how voices are represented, and I considered the questions, whose voices are represented? Who chooses how much gets heard and what gets left out?

I wondered whether constructions regarding identity may open or close ways of talking about experiences of caring. I made the decision that this approach may have been more suitable to consider how YCs construct their own identities and ideas they have of themselves as opposed to the current positioning of the research which sought to explore interpersonal objectives. However, my research findings and gaps in the literature imply possible scope to consider the social discourses that occur in how YCs are constructed in language and how the language can contribute to the empowerment of people or possibility to constrain them. It may also be interesting to research how people “take up” or reject identities in future research. Further research may also have potential to explore how adults working with YCs may influence discursive repertoires.

3.6. Data Saturation

A consideration held in mind when deciding whether I had a “good enough” sample, was data saturation. In recognition of a small sample size, this was something I had been concerned about. In keeping with my theoretical positioning and qualitative approach adopted, it was recognised that new meanings can always be theoretically possible (Braun and Clarke, 2021c). I also recognise that there is potential for new insights and understanding (Mason, 2010 cited in Braun and Clarke 2021b) which extend beyond this research. Research represents the constructions shared by a particular group of professionals at a single snapshot in time, it is not the intention of the research to be generalisable as this would not be consistent with the theoretical positioning and methodological decisions made (Braun and Clarke, 2021c). However,

it provides a contribution to knowledge and a basis for future research. Possibilities have been discussed in the empirical paper and in the sections above.

3.7. Future research

I have sought to highlight areas for possible future directions throughout the thesis, including the empirical paper.

The present research could also be replicated with a larger sample and may benefit from the stages of AI being divided into separate focus group forums. For example, it may be beneficial to analyse the “Discovery” phase separately from the “Dream” phase. Although the chat function of Microsoft Teams was encouraged, it was not often used. A programme such as Mentimeter could be used to create a word cloud to capture thoughts, reflections, words, or themes that felt pertinent to participants. Findings from the “Discover” phase could have been shared in a follow up focus group with participants via a poster or presentation with a view to leading into the “Dream” phase. Future research could involve presenting the findings of this research to prospective participants for example, YCs, support services and schools in order to continue the AI cycle. For example, co-constructing a shared vision of hopes and dreams for hearing and representing the voices of YCs with a view to moving toward the “Design” and “Deliver” phase. Future research may also benefit from focus groups being conducted in person. Although a strength of this research was the ability to bring participants together, “in person” focus groups may allow for further creative ways of working and may also change the dynamics and flow of conversations.

As previously mentioned, further research relating to power dynamics, discourse and identity may also be beneficial when considering requests for “pupil views”. Findings from this thesis highlight the value of relationships, connection, and trust, adding to the extant literature which suggests that CYP may communicate best with people who know them well or have developed connections. For example, Bomber (2020) suggests that where there is attunement between adults and children, interaction and understanding can work more effectively.

3.8. Contributions to knowledge and relevance to practice

Considerations for practice have been discussed in the empirical paper. Further contributions to knowledge are tentatively discussed in recognition that the current research does not seek to offer an “absolute truth” (Burr, 2015).

3.8.1. Relevance to existing knowledge

As discussed, there has been a growth in research seeking to listen to the views of YCs (Joseph et al., 2020). In addition, it has been proposed that there is a need for further action research and participatory projects to take place with YCs (Joseph et al., 2020). Despite this, the extant research suggests ongoing challenges in relation to recruiting YCs to participate in research, and much of the research to date has been with YCs who attend projects/services (Choudhury and Williams, 2020).

Moreover, literature often referred to YC’s as a “hidden” or “hard to reach” population (Kennan et al., 2012; Bjorgvinsdottir and Halldorsdottir, 2014; Stamatopoulos, 2015). I recognised that although there is an acknowledgement that research would benefit from hearing the voices of YCs who may be seldom heard, there appeared to be a dearth in the literature about how this might be achieved. I

became curious about the systemic factors which may have an impact on CYPs participation and considered the following questions:

- Who wants to be heard?
- How do they want to be heard?
- How can we listen deeper?
- Who decides which voices get to be heard?

It was acknowledged in a review of the literature that there is diversity in practice when seeking CYPs views (Phelps, 2017; Hardy and Hobbs, 2017). The existing literature also highlighted that there are a range of professionals, services and organisations involved with YCs (Choudhury and Williams, 2020). An AI informed approach was therefore felt to be appropriate to explore the views of stakeholders about current practice and possibilities. Paired with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, this helped to gather an insight regarding the interactions that occur in nested systems around the child and shone a light on complex interactions which take place when promoting participation.

It is suggested that the analysis from the empirical paper adds to the knowledge base about "the best of what is" regarding approaches to listen to and represent the views of YCs. It also contributes to possibilities for "what might be". Arguably this research also adds an insight into what is important when listening to families and professionals. It provides further information about the complexities of working with CYP who are considered "seldom heard" and of ethical considerations.

3.8.2. Relevance to EP practice

It is important to note that EPs' did not take part in this research and further research may benefit from gathering the views of EPs' as the extant literature has highlighted a paucity of research regarding the role of the EP in working with YCs (Choudhury and Williams, 2020). Tentative considerations are therefore offered in response to the analysis and discussion.

EPs are skilled practitioners in supporting relationships and have a central role in working with CYP, families, LA's, education settings and in a multi-agency capacity, therefore offering both holistic and individual support (Morris and Atkinson, 2018).

Moreover, participants in this research discussed the benefits of working collaboratively with families, other professionals, and the value of sharing "good practice". A collaborative approach, which allows for co-construction, involving the YC, their family and the school may facilitate greater understanding of the complexities of caring and this may provide an opportunity to counter judgement and possible power dynamics at play (Doutre et al. 2013; Moore et al., 2011). This approach may also help those involved in supporting the YCs and/or their family to view the YC within their context (Doutre et al., 2013; Pickup, 2021).

3.8.3. Relevance to my own practice

Henriksen and Mishra (2019) highlight the impact that research can have on a researcher's practice due to the development of knowledge through engagement

with the process. As such, I feel that it is important to discuss the relevance and impact of this research on my own practice.

In relation to the subtheme “space and place matters”, I have endeavoured to approach consultations and individual work with a wider appreciation of the power which may exist in spaces. For example, requests for involvement in my current placement are typically from schools. When working in schools I considered the spaces which are offered when I meet with CYP and with families. For example, there was an occasion where a YP shared that they did not like the room we were working in, and this was reported to be due to previous associations with the space. Although I was previously aware of the importance of where I meet with CYP, I feel that this research brought about deeper reflection.

Moreover, the findings regarding “space and place” corroborate with literature surrounding “hidden”, “hard to reach” and “seldom-heard” groups. For example, the extant literature suggests that there is a greater need to visit communities, projects, and events to develop a greater appreciation of facilitators and barriers to participation (Phelps, 2017). This was felt to be important in this research. Although ethically it raises questions regarding how this may be achieved. For example, as noted above, consent is required to visit settings when conducting research and I experienced challenges with gaining consent from one strata (Kay, 2019) in order to reach out to another.

Within my practice I use a One Page Profile (OPP) to introduce myself before working with CYP. Given the findings regarding connection and the development of trust, I have reflected that the OPP may also be beneficial in relation to research. I

wondered whether sharing my OPP with services during the initial recruitment phase may have provided CYP with further information about my role. This would possibly prepare CYP and services for me to visit the settings and to make an informed choice about whether they would like to hear about the research (Boswell et al., 2021).

Finally, I offer a quote by Carter and Maclean (2022) which I feel is representative of this thesis research journey and something I will continue to hold in mind for further research and in my EP practice, “Personally, I have never found any young person hard to reach. Sometimes, I’ve had to go where they were, at the time they were available, and with language that they spoke, but they were never unreachable” (Carter and Maclean, 2022).

3.9. Reporting and disseminating research

The findings of this research represent a focus group comprised of four participants and therefore it is important to consider that the information shared may be representative of a particular world view.

Danermark (2019) proposes that dissemination of findings is vital for “real-world” intervention. When considering possibilities for dissemination, I referred to Harmsworth and Turpin (2000) who suggest a three-level process. The three levels include dissemination for action, dissemination for awareness and dissemination for understanding. I have therefore considered the following actions with a view to address each level,

- A summary research report will be shared with participants following examination. This was made clear to all participants.

- As discussed, the use of a programme such as Mentimeter to create a word cloud and/or a poster may also be considered to share key themes and reflections.
- If possible, I would like to consult with stakeholders regarding dissemination of findings. It is acknowledged that journal articles and peer reviewed papers may not be accessible to all and therefore I would like to consider alternative possibilities.
- I have offered to attend team meetings to share findings following completion of the research and to gather feedback about how the findings may be shared with YCs in the future.
- I have been invited to present my findings to a team who are organising a YCs event. This may be possible following examination of the thesis.
- I would like to consider publication in a UK peer-reviewed journal such as *Educational Psychology in Practice*, this may provide opportunities for EPs to access and share the research.
- Writing a blog post for edpsy.org may be beneficial to make the research more accessible therefore potentially reaching a wider audience. The blog post could also be shared on social media platforms such as Twitter. Social media platforms may enable me to share the research with a wide range of professionals who may be interested in the research area.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Literature search strategy

An initial search of the literature took place in November 2020 to gain an understanding of current literature regarding YCs. Further searches took place between March and July 2021.

A meeting took place with a subject librarian to identify possible terms, search strategies and databases (Table 15).

Table 15

Key search terms for the literature review

| Search number | Search terms included in all databases |
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| 1. | “young care*” or “child caregiving” or “youth caring” or “child carer” |
| 2. | “voice” or “participation” or “participatory” or “person centred” or “PCP” or “views” or “experience” or “phenomenology” or “child centred” |
| 3. | “educational psych*” or “psychology” |

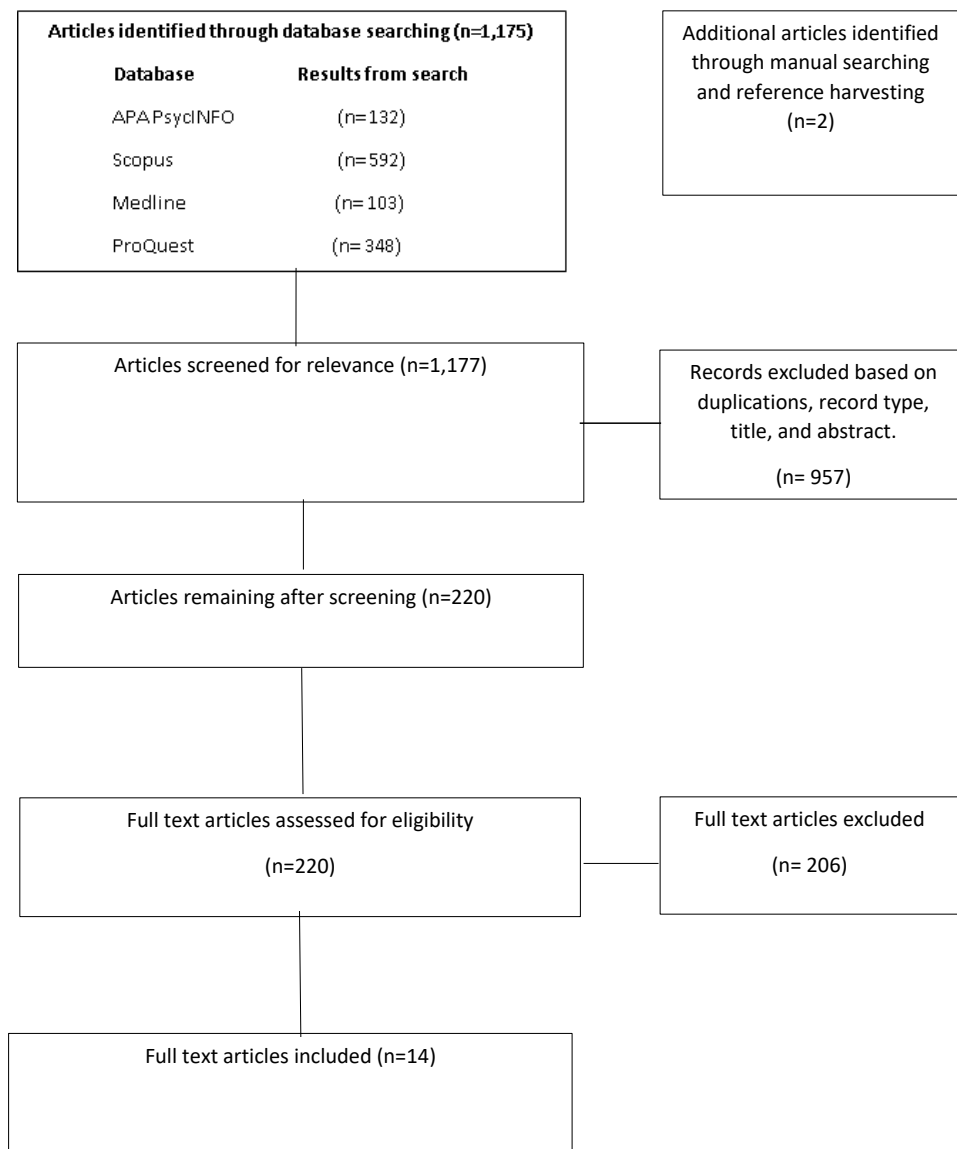
Note: Searches 1 and 2 were combined with ‘AND’ in databases. Searches 1 and 3 were combined with ‘AND’ in databases.

An examination of the literature took place, titles and abstracts were examined to ascertain the relevance to the current thesis and once duplicates were removed, 220 results remained. Full-text articles were assessed for eligibility based on the inclusion criteria and relevance to the current thesis. 14 research papers were included (Appendix B). A flow diagram (figure 7) has been included to represent the literature identified through searches. It is important to note that due to the narrative approach taken in the overall literature

review, wider literature was included to gain an overview and impression of the research surrounding YCs, their voice in research and experiences and to include relevant contextual, legislative, and theoretical information. Further literature included secondary data sources such as, seminal papers, reviews, research by third sector organisations and grey literature.

Figure 7

Flow diagram representing the literature identified through searches



Appendix B: Summary of the research papers identified

Table 16

Summary of the research papers identified

| Name of paper | Research question- aim of research | Participants and recruitment | Methods/ontology and epistemology | Findings | Strengths and critiques of the research. |
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| <p>McAndrew, S., Warne, T., Fallon, D., and Moran, P. (2012). Young, gifted and caring: A project narrative of young carers, their mental health and getting them involved in education, research and practice.</p> | <p>Exploring the impact of the caring role on mental wellbeing.</p> <p>To strengthen collaboration between local community groups with an interest in mental health in supporting young people.</p> | <p>Young carers aged 13-17</p> <p>Presentations to an audience of approximately 50 people including, nurses, social workers, voluntary agency workers, schoolteachers, professional educators.</p> <p>6 young carers who are members of a forum for young carers.</p> | <p>Draws on participatory methods of research.</p> <p>World café event</p> <p>Two presentations led by young carers (two groups).</p> <p>Question and answer session following presentations. This led to a group discussion – 30 minutes to discuss each of the four topics. Thoughts were captured on flipcharts for a feedback discussion.</p> | <p>Young carers reported feeling excluded from decision making – dismissed directly or indirectly through the use of language e.g., professional/adult language.</p> <p>The “forgotten” (p.16) – After hearing young carer accounts professionals wanted to ensure that there were means of ensuring young carers can access services and receive information about available services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consideration about how to make information more accessible. <p>Advocates for carers were discussed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaking to carers as a “tick box exercise” or speaking to parents | <p>Strengths:</p> <p>Emphasis on young carers experiences being reported through participatory methods highlighting the role of the individual in sharing their voice.</p> <p>Presentations were produced by young carers. I wondered about the extent to which individual experiences get represented within a group forum.</p> <p>Research included young carers and professionals. This may have allowed for triangulation of information.</p> |

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| | | | <p>Qualitative research – ontology and epistemology not included.</p> | <p>rather than young carers directly (p.16).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needing own support. This included support for practicalities and education. <p>Lack of consistency in support.</p> <p>The importance of fun and a “safe haven” to discuss personal issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voluntary agencies - Bullied at school - Brought about discussion of advocacy (revisited). <p>School assemblies or lessons to raise awareness of young carers and issues that are important to them. Dealing with issues of stigma (p.17).</p> <p>Outcome: further research projects where some young people will be involved as “co-researchers”.</p> | <p>Four topics for discussion were decided upon for the groups. Collaborative approach.</p> <p>Participatory approaches were utilised. Young carers guided the presentation and had opportunities to share their experiences and work with professionals.</p> <p>Research led to further development of research projects whereby some young people will be involved as “co-researchers”. Young people becoming schools service user and carer group.</p> <p>Limitations: While collaborative decision making on areas of discussion may have been beneficial for steering the discussion and creating a focus. It could be important to consider whether there were other areas that may</p> |
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| | | | | | <p>have been valuable or left unspoken.</p> <p>Limited information on how data was analysed.</p> |
| <p>Kennan, D., Fives, A., Canavan, J., (2012). Accessing a hard to reach population: reflections on research with young carers in Ireland. <i>Child and family social work</i>. 17. Pp 275-283</p> | <p>Reflecting on the successes and limitations to balancing competing requirements e.g. the need to protect children from harm in research with respecting their competence.</p> <p>Examining “mechanisms through which young carers can be identified”.</p> | <p>Purposive sampling – Gatekeepers with youth specific remits phase 1 (5 young carers).</p> <p>Phase 2 – 26 participants.</p> <p>Sent research posters to schools and youth organisations.</p> | <p>Exploratory research</p> | <p>Researcher felt that there was a need for a definition – at the time of writing it was noted that there was no definition in legislation in Ireland.</p> <p>Lack of familiarity/clarity of what a “young carer” is. Unclear about which services would be relevant to contact in the absence of young carer services.</p> <p>Challenges with recruiting participants.</p> <p>Although aims of the research were shared with gatekeepers some gatekeepers and frontline staff were reported to be reluctant to raise the research with young carers and their families (stigma or parents would not consider their children to be young carers).</p> <p>Despite lack of clarity about the definition some gatekeepers</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> <p>The research team sought to reduce bias by looking at the geographical spread and diversity in agencies.</p> <p>Highlighted ethical considerations and challenges when recruiting children as participants. Although the research focused on young carers, it highlighted a number of factors to consider when conducting research with “vulnerable” or “hidden” populations.</p> <p>Limitations:</p> <p>In relation to the present research, some of the legislation is no longer applicable or dated and therefore it will be interesting to identify whether more recent changes to legislation including young carers</p> |

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| | | | | <p>were reported to put time and effort into recruiting potential participants.</p> <p>Time spent building relationships and raising awareness with gatekeepers was reported to be beneficial.</p> <p>Consideration of the power of gatekeepers to “censor” or select children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protecting children may mean “silencing their voice” (278) <p>Consideration of safeguarding and ethics in relation to recruitment.</p> | <p>assessments have had an impact on the “visibility” and knowledge surrounding young carers.</p> |
| <p>Skovdal M., Vincent Ogotu., Aoro, C., and Campbell C., (2009) young carers as social actors: coping strategies of children caring for ailing or ageing guardians in Western Kenya. <i>Social Science and medicine</i>, 69 (4), pp. 587-595.</p> | <p>Exploring how young carers cope with challenging circumstances.</p> <p>Focus on children as social actors and active co-constructors.</p> <p>Exploring protective factors, resilience and coping.</p> | <p>48 young carers (aged 11-17).</p> <p>Photovoice/draw and write technique. (Purposive sample – local community guides).</p> <p>Purposive sample of 48 “caregiving children”.</p> <p>10 adults including “caregivers,</p> | <p>Qualitative research. Data collection included individual interviews, a draw and write technique, and photography. Some participants also completed essays regarding caring experiences and daily diagrams.</p> <p>Two group discussions.</p> | <p>Discussed the relationship between coping and the extent to which young carers participate in the community/negotiate support from the community.</p> <p>Findings: interrupted education, inadequate access to nutritious food, limited time for friends, fewer resources as young carers lived with adults who may have been unable to work – poverty stigma.</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> <p>Equal number of male/female participants and sought a range of caring experiences. A range of caring experiences can be helpful in research to take a “broad brush” approach, equally there may be some limitations in that it is difficult to generalise information. However, if it is not the intention to</p> |

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| | | <p>community representatives and social development officers” (p.620).</p> <p>24 participants took part in an individual interview.</p> <p>27 “caregiving children” wrote essays relating to their experiences of caring.</p> <p>2 group discussions to explore findings (all children invited – 33 took part)</p> <p>Individual interviews with 10 adults (purposive sampling)</p> <p>Study was conducted in a rural district (Bondo).</p> <p>Those who cared for a parent for 25 hours or more were recruited.</p> | <p>Thematic analysis (Attride-stirling, 2001). was used to analyse the data.</p> <p>Individual interviews.</p> | <p>Coping factors relating to these findings included: sources of social support including extended family. Community ethic was seen as a coping factor but not available to all. Importance of friends, school as a place of hope but also as a place of judgement and exclusion in some cases. Animals, growing fruit and vegetables, offering “domestic services” to the community e.g. sewing - generating income to support financially.</p> <p>Considered constructions of childhood.</p> <p>Church as a source of emotional support.</p> <p>Minority of children reported entirely positive or entirely negative accounts of caregiving experience.</p> <p>Reported a relationship between coping and community participation. Also discussed social representations relating to the</p> | <p>generalise and compare exploring the broader experiences can offer a helpful insight regarding the unique individual experiences of young carers.</p> <p>Provided a rationale for age group included in the research.</p> <p>Triangulation – research with young carers and with adults.</p> <p>Includes information on processes of ethics for example around confidentiality (pseudonyms), informed consent, workshops regarding taking and using photographs in research. Highlighted challenges of photo-voice and informed consent.</p> <p>Clear explanation and transparency about coping and themes.</p> <p>Researchers highlight the possibility of recall bias.</p> |
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| | | | | <p>role of care giving viewed as being positive and being “good”.</p> | <p>Recognition of possible variables that may have had an impact on findings that were not related to the caring role or may have been in addition to the caring role. For example, poverty.</p> <p>Limitations: Young carers for the research were recruited based on the number of hours they care for a member of their family. This may have limited the study relating to those who care for families under some of the alternative definitions.</p> <p>Similarly, to other studies purposive sampling was limited to those with access to children who care – known carers. Limits to accessing those who remain “hidden”.</p> |
| <p>Bolas, H., Van Wersch, A., and Flynn, D. (2007). The well-being of young people</p> | <p>“Exploring the psychological processes that</p> | <p>5 young carers (aged between 14-18) who</p> | <p>Semi-structured interviews with young carers –</p> | <p>Themes: What caring means – comparisons to work/jobs,</p> | <p>Strengths: Researchers describe ethical considerations for</p> |

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| <p>who care for a dependent relative: An interpretive phenomenological analysis. <i>Psychology and Health</i>, 22:7, 829-850.</p> | <p>determine and maintain the relationship between the young person's role as a carer and their wellbeing" (p. 832).</p> | <p>attend young carers groups. All young carers who took part cared for a relative for a period of over 2 years. Participants self-selected.</p> | <p>seeking to gain an "insiders' perspective" (Conrad, 1987) Each interview took 45 minutes. Analysis: IPA Social constructionism Phenomenological approach</p> | <p>descriptions about choice and duty relating to caring role, "relentless and overwhelming", "guilt and obligation", "anger and frustration". Isolation and distancing from others – social distancing was described. Concealing or privileged information – not explaining "condition" to others (p 837). Acceptance and role being "judged". Social understanding and gender identity. Lack of understanding, feeling misjudged or rejected. "Social isolation and loneliness" (p.838). Integrated caring – otherness and isolation. Self-esteem and pride. Caring as part of identity (emerging identities). Concept of "courtesy stigma" was noted (p.842). Participant accounts include challenges relating to peer</p> | <p>example anonymity and confidentiality. Researcher positionality is discussed. This is in keeping with the IPA approach of being reflective regarding the position of the researcher in research. Respondent checking – participants checked preliminary lists of themes. Findings draw on psychological theory relating to social support. Researchers note the difficulty in recruiting sample of participants. Acknowledging that the findings are not definitive. Limitations: Participants were recruited from one young carer group. While this may be beneficial when considering an IPA</p> |
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| | | | | <p>relationships and pursuing autonomy.</p> <p>Caring roles contributing to a sense of social exclusion and restricted social participation (p 843).</p> <p>Feelings of accomplishment and pride</p> | <p>approach, it may limit the research to exploring experiences of those who receive support. However, researchers acknowledge that participants were not intended to be representative of all young carers.</p> |
| <p>Gough, G., and Gulliford, A. (2020). Resilience amongst young carers: Investigating protective factors and benefit-finding as perceived by young carers. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i>, 36(2), 149-169.</p> | <p>Research was based on a shift from a focus on risk to take account of resiliency factors.</p> <p>Identifying factors that may be related to young carer adjustment</p> <p>Investigating benefit-finding associated with young caregiving</p> | <p>Young carers (12-17) who achieved five or more A* to C GCSE grades while caring.</p> <p>46 participants for survey (29 female and 17 male).</p> <p>Self-enrolled onto the study (group discussion).</p> | <p>Sequential mixed method study.</p> <p>Positive psychology Strengths based perspective</p> <p>focus group and survey</p> <p>Pragmatism</p> <p>Phase 1 (group) – transcribed with inter-rater checks.</p> <p>Phase 2 – thematic analysis</p> <p>Pearson product moment coefficient</p> | <p>Relationship between self-efficacy, social support, school connectedness and young carer adjustment.</p> <p>Sense of agency – group members referred to determination.</p> <p>Social support – siblings and extended family helping to cope and manage.</p> <p>Phase 2 – positively correlated with wellbeing and inversely with mental wellbeing. No significant relationship between social support and benefit finding.</p> | <p>Factors that can be considered both strengths and limitations of the study:</p> <p>Focus groups can help to gather a multiplicity of views however limitations can be considered for example, power relations within the context of the group. Constructions being brought to the forefront may be influenced by more confident group members.</p> <p>The notion that some people may not feel as comfortable sharing views if they do not match with the dominant discourse.</p> |

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| | | | <p>correlations to explore relationships between protective factors and adjustment outcomes.</p> | <p>Key adults were considered supportive</p> <p>Social connectedness – strong connections with peers and support services (pro-social organisations) were associated with positive functioning.</p> <p>School connectedness – an important community resource (Gilligan, 1998)</p> <p>Reported ambivalence related to experiences of school. School as an escape – consistent with research by Becker and Becker 2008 and Barry, 2011).</p> <p>Negative experiences – lack of support. Similarly, to literature by McAndrew et al. (2012). Phase 2 – positive association between school connectedness and adjustment for young carers. Possibly lessen effects of difficult home situation.</p> | <p>However, researchers followed this phase up with an additional survey to gather individual views.</p> <p>While the survey was informed by the initial focus group to ensure that the research was guided by young carers directly, for the abovementioned reasons, there may have been some bias relating to the survey questions as they are shaped by a small group of young carers. Some voices may have been heard more than others and therefore other possible lenses to construct questions may not have been explored.</p> <p>Use of educational achievement as an indicator of educational success and a marker of resilience. While this is noted to be a “widely used national indicator of success” (p.6), it can be helpful to acknowledge that educational “success”</p> |
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| | | | | | <p>and resilience are multi-dimensional and there may be additional factors to consider.</p> <p>Strengths: Themes from phase 1 were triangulated with the wider literature indicating themes for further exploration in phase 2.</p> <p>Clearly summarises the relevance to Educational Psychology practice.</p> <p>Limitations: Focus group was recruited through a young carer project in the UK – again as with a majority of the literature, recruiting from young carer support services limits experiences to those receiving support and potentially excludes those not accessing support groups.</p> <p>Retrospective account. Can be considered “methodologically limited”</p> |
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| | | | | | <p>(Joseph, Sempik, Leu, Becker 2020. p. 84).</p> <p>Questionnaire was piloted.</p> <p>One critique as noted by the researchers was the heterogeneity in the sample of participants in both phases of the research which may have also had an impact on measures of psychological adjustment.</p> |
| <p>Barry, M. (2011). 'I realised that I wasn't alone': the views and experiences of young carers from a social capital perspective. <i>Journal of Youth Studies</i>, 14(5), 523-539.</p> | <p>Researching social capital</p> <p>Exploring young carers' views and experiences of their current lives within their families, schools, and local networks.</p> <p>Perceptions of caring role in relation to family, school, friends, and professionals</p> | <p>20 young carers across Scotland (10 male and 10 female) aged between 12-23. 18 participants were aged between 12-16.</p> | <p>One to one semi-structured interviews</p> | <p>Family – “comfort zone” of the family being identified as positive. However, some young carers reported wanting more social mobility with friends, school and young carer projects as these settings were considered a “relief” or “get away”.</p> <p>Caring as a barrier to achieving goals.</p> <p>Young carers not wanting to bring friends home.</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> <p>Highlighted the sensitive nature of questions and therefore considered ethics around one-to-one interviews as opposed to focus group.</p> <p>In depth description of ethical considerations including ensuring that support was available to participants during the interview and afterwards from project staff.</p> <p>Limitations:</p> |

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| | Exploring past achievements and experiences of friendships and support networks as well as their future needs, aspirations, and expectations. | | | <p>Limited trust in “outsiders” such as teachers, doctors and social workers.</p> <p>“Offer and receive from peers’ resources that could bolster social capital” (p.536).</p> <p>Young carers experiencing decreased social capital.</p> | <p>Participants were recruited from young carer projects. Homogeneity in that they all accessed a young carer project however, as noted for other research projects recruitment is limited to those receiving support.</p> <p>Limited details on analysis.</p> |
| <p>Doutre, G., Green, R., and Knight-Elliott, A. (2013). Listening to the voices of young carers using interpretative phenomenological analysis and a strengths-based perspective. <i>Educational and Child Psychology</i>, 30(4), 30-43.</p> | <p>Sought to address limited literature on young carers in Educational Psychology.</p> <p>Wanting to explore individual differences and the diversity of the young carer population.</p> <p>Strength based perspective – understanding resilience</p> | <p>6 young carers aged between 11 and 13.</p> | <p>Inductive constructionist approach.</p> <p>IPA</p> <p>3 separate interviews.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>The initial interviews were photo elicitation (things they are proud of, things that are challenging, things that were helpful).</p> | <p>Positive response to complex lives – living in environments with multiple challenges which were separate from the caring role. Challenges were responded to through the caring role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciation of life - Good things associated with caring - Opportunities to develop relationships - Friends with those in similar situations. <p>Tensions – in identity and family relationships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeling different to “normal peers”. | <p>Strengths:</p> <p>All young carers in the study were caring for those with a mental illness. This can be considered a strength of the research as the researchers acknowledged that young carers are not a homogenous group, however sought homogeneity through recruiting participants who cared for parents with a mental illness. Moreover, literature suggests that for a number of reasons young carers caring for a parent with mental illness can be considered to be a</p> |

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| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constructing identity as “brave”, “protective” and “helpful” was reported to be a “positive adaptational process” (p.36). - Contradictory adult versus child identity. - “broadening identity”. - Comparing caregiving identities to other young carers. - Balancing caregiving responsibilities with their own individual needs. - Valuing closeness while also wanting to create a space for themselves. <p>Perception of life as “growth orientated”, young carers viewed some challenges as also being opportunities.</p> <p>Implications for EP practice – not lowering expectations. Create opportunities and be flexible to enhance existing strengths.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family focused interventions. <p>Supporting knowledge</p> | <p>“hard to reach population”.</p> <p>Provided some guidance for the photo elicitation interview which was related to the aims of the research for example exploring strengths through taking images of things that they were proud of and found helpful.</p> <p>After interviews initial reflections were shared with participants.</p> <p>Limitations: As with most studies included in the literature review, participants were recruited from a young carer project. In this research study key workers were asked to identify “equal numbers of boys and girls aged between 11 and 13 years, caring for a parent with a mental illness” (p.34). They also had to be known to the young carer service</p> |
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| | | | | and skills of multi-professional colleagues. | for two years or more. A limitation of taking this approach is that key workers are selecting the participants, this means that there may be young carers who were not asked or there may be a potential bias when considering why particular young people may have been chosen for the research. However, the reasons for selecting a particular group were made clear in the research, as the researchers recognised that there was limited research relating to young carers who care for a parent/guardian with mental ill health and therefore the recruitment of participants required an understanding of the caring situation. |
| Bjorgvinsdottir, K., and Halldorsdottir, S. (2014). Silent, invisible and unacknowledged: experiences of young | Studying experiences of being a young caregiver of a chronically ill | Purposive sample - 11 young carers | Phenomenology – Vancouver approach which includes a phenomenology, | Feeling uninformed, excluded, troubled and abandoned. Obligated to care. | Possible strengths and Limitations: In most cases young carers were no longer primary caregivers and therefore |

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| <p>caregivers of single parents diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. <i>Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences</i>, 28(1), 38-48.</p> | <p>parent diagnosed with MS.</p> | | <p>hermeneutics and constructivism.</p> <p>21 interviews (1-3 with each participant).</p> | <p>Sparse knowledge about their parents' diagnosis led to anxiety for some participants.</p> <p>Not having opportunities to openly discuss the illness with professionals – “state of silence” (p.41).</p> <p>Adapting to new roles in the home.</p> <p>Most young carers in the study were living with a single parent and reported not having others in the household to assist them.</p> <p>One young carer spoke about the caregiving role being demanding, embarrassing and difficult.</p> <p>“Caring without being cared for” (p. 43).</p> <p>Fear of authorities being notified – disruption or separation.</p> <p>Being “left to manage”. Discussed being unsupported in school.</p> | <p>some were reporting retrospective accounts. However, this could also be viewed as a strength as participants were able to take time to reflect on experiences.</p> <p>The researcher acknowledges potential sample bias as participants were selected by an organisation.</p> <p>Member checking took place. This could be interpreted as positive but also a critique as member checking may assume that there is a truth however, phenomenology suggests that there is an acknowledgement that the analysis is one interpretation of the data as constructed by those involved in the interview process.</p> |
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| | | | | <p>Isolation from friends when the care role became demanding.</p> <p>Two carers discussed not wanting to share information about the caregiving role with friends. Opening up to others at a later point was reported to “lose a few pounds” (p.43).</p> <p>Access to support including financial support from family members was reported to be beneficial.</p> <p>Life changes when meeting a supportive partner.</p> <p>Leaving the primary caregiving role – identifying that professional care is needed. Some reported that they had known their parent needed additional support from professionals but were unsure about how to access the support.</p> <p>“Silence had trapped them” (p.44).</p> | |
| Thomas, N., Stainton, T., Jackson, S., Cheung, W. Y., Doubtfire, S., and Webb, A. | “To develop a clear working | Young carers from urban and rural communities. | A series of focus groups took place at young carer projects | Needs going unrecognised – limited recognition of young carers. | Strength and limitation: A strength of the study was that the researchers |

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| <p>(2003). Your friends don't understand': Invisibility and unmet need in the lives of 'young carers. <i>Child and Family Social Work</i>, 8(1), 35-46.</p> | <p>definition of young carer" (p36).</p> <p>"To learn about the characteristics of young carers, who they are and their experiences of life, perspectives on their situation and expectations for the future" (p 37).</p> <p>Specifically experiences in Wales including the culture, language and economic political situation.</p> | <p>A pack containing information about the project was distributed to schools, doctor's surgery's, education welfare officers, primary health care team, social services and relevant voluntary organisations. Young carers projects were also contacted.</p> <p>21 young carers took part. 18 were recruited from young carers projects.</p> <p>Participants were aged between 9 and 18 years.</p> <p>8 male participants, 13 female participants.</p> <p>6 participants were from minority ethnic backgrounds.</p> <p>Two children whose first language was Welsh did not want to</p> | <p>to inform interview questions.</p> <p>Drawing exercises and a "wish" or "worry" box for those who wanted to contribute but did not want to say out loud.</p> <p>Modified version of the "quality of life index" was developed to use with children and young people for the purpose of generating discussion.</p> | <p>Only one respondent reported having a supportive member of staff in school who they could regularly talk to.</p> <p>School identified as having limited understanding or "trying too hard and being over-intrusive" (p39).</p> <p>Keeping up with schoolwork while caring was reported to be difficult.</p> <p>Children as interpreters for a parent whose English was limited – feeling that their concerns were not being heard or responded to.</p> <p>Reponses regarding social workers were largely negative. Some young carers however, reported receiving a helpful assessment or being referred to young carer projects.</p> <p>Friends being important but also reported to have limited understanding of the caring role.</p> | <p>sought to recruit young carers to participate via different organisations and services, however they were only successful at recruiting via young carers projects.</p> <p>Strengths: Focus group - participants were not asked about individual circumstances but were asked to draw around a volunteer and use the drawing to represent a young carer writing about feelings, thoughts and worries in third person. This possibly provided potential to discuss constructions about the caring experience through externalising the young carer position.</p> <p>The wish or worry box may have helped to negate some of the critiques of focus groups whereby those who may not feel confident to speak or voice thoughts aloud had</p> |
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| | | be interviewed in the Welsh language. | | <p>Worry and fear reported by participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worry about their parent and worry for themselves e.g. being taken into care. <p>Feeling recognised, valued and understood by young carer projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for someone to talk to. - Under-resourced and over-burdened projects. - Young carers clubs as a “poor substitution” for inclusion. <p>Positive experiences – part of valued family life, developing life skills, closeness in family relationships.</p> <p>Caring does not equate with parenting - responsibilities are different from role reversal.</p> | <p>an opportunity to add their voice through written feedback.</p> <p>Ethical considerations were clearly highlighted, and participants were reminded of the right to withdraw.</p> <p>Participants could also choose to be interviewed alone or with a parent.</p> |
| Nagl-Cupal, M., and Prajo, N. (2019). It is something special: How children and their parents experience a | To explore young carers experiences of a summer camp and to gather the | 14 participants 11 interviews with children and eight with | 19 interviews with young carers and parents/carers. | A motivating factor for children attending camp was parents feeling that they could not “offer a family holiday”. Camp | Strengths: Young carers could choose to participate alone, with a |

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| <p>camp for young people who care for a parent with a severe physical illness. <i>Children and Youth Services Review, 107, 104560.</i></p> | <p>perceptions of their parents.</p> | <p>adults from six families.</p> | <p>Interpretive approach.</p> <p>Purposive sample. Young carers between the ages of 10-14 years. Participants were required to be a carer of a parent with a 'severe' physical illness. Parents were also required to demonstrate an interest in taking part.</p> <p>Two separate interview schedules one for young carers and one for parents.</p> <p>Qualitative content analysis.</p> | <p>was an opportunity for new experiences and a break.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final decisions to attend were made by children. <p>Joyful anticipation.</p> <p>Worry about the cared for family member.</p> <p>Participation in outdoor activities was valued.</p> <p>Sense of togetherness, being with "likeminded peers".</p> <p>Feeling looked after by someone.</p> <p>Reported to be relaxed and happy when returning home. Parents also commented on children maintaining social contacts and being more independent.</p> <p>Difficulties with coming home in relation to "freedom"</p> | <p>sibling or in the presence of their parent.</p> <p>Findings were discussed in a research team and presented to those responsible to the camp. A presentation and discussion of the results were also shared with an "expert group" and to young carers.</p> <p>Limitations: Some interviews were very short (10 minutes). However, this may reflect responsiveness to participants.</p> <p>Researchers report that the presence of a parent in interviews with young carers may have limited openness. It could also be argued that parents being present was a strength of the study as it recognises that caring does not occur in silo, from a social constructionist perspective it could be argued that experiences</p> |
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| | | | | | exist between people and there may have been information within the dialogue to provide additional information about young carers experiences. |
| Williams, N. G. (2016). <i>Exploring young carers' school based resilience: a focus on risk and protective factors</i> (Doctoral dissertation, Cardiff University). | To explore young carers experiences of education. The study sought to explore school based resilience. | Six young carers took part in a focus group. 45 young carers responded to a survey. | Critical realism Focus group Surveys Analysis of the focus group - Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Analysis of the survey- descriptive statistics and independent sample two-tailed t-tests. | Research highlighted risk factors including: bullying and schools "lack of awareness". It was perceived that young carers experienced more "negative experiences" than their peers. Protective factors included: positive relationships with some key staff members, non-judgemental approaches to support and having good quality friendships and support. | The researcher designed their own questionnaire in response to the research and engagement with the literature. This could be interpreted as both a strength and a limitation. Strength: Participatory approach – the researcher sought feedback from young carers throughout the research process. Limitation: All participants were recruited from young carer support projects. |
| Choudhury, D., and Williams, H. (2020). Strengthening the educational inclusion of | This study approached a young carer service/project | Three young carers were recruited from a young carer project. Three project workers. | Constructivist and phenomenological. | Research highlighted the importance of a key person to support positive adjustment and to mediate difficulties. | Strengths: Researchers presented at a project meeting to |

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| <p>young carers with additional needs: an eco-systemic understanding. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i>, 36(3), 241-256.</p> | <p>(Spurgeons) “to gather information on the relationships between Young Carers, projects and the community to develop a holistic picture of protective factors that contribute to the educational inclusion of Young Carers” (p.243).</p> <p>Use of ecological framework to explore strengthening and protective factors.</p> <p>Looking at the “push and pull factors, protective factors and risk factors” (Choudhury and Williams, 2020 p.245)</p> | <p>Two welfare officers employed by schools. Young Carers were required to be over 16 years old and accessing full time education, be identified as a Young Carer using the definition by the Children and Families Act 2014. Young Carers were also required to have an identified educational need and access SEN support or an EHCP.</p> | <p>Semi-structured interviews with three sample groups.</p> <p>Three different interview schedules – one for each cohort.</p> <p>Draws upon Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory and Brofenbrenner’s (2001) bioecological theory of human development.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional and psychological support. - A safe space <p>Interaction between the key person and parent/carer recipient was found to be important for engagement in school e.g. mediating concerns that parents may have regarding social care or their child being “taken away”.</p> <p>Importance of peer support (other young carers). The role of supportive relationships reducing feelings of isolation.</p> <p>The importance of providing safe social spaces e.g. spaces to meet with others. Contributing to belonging and inclusion.</p> <p>Findings discussed media exposure and impact on school support and action for Young Carers.</p> <p>The impact of Socio-cultural values and attitudes on trust or mistrust between parents and schools e.g. negative</p> | <p>describe the research. They also provided a space for questions and answers.</p> <p>In keeping with the ecological/bioecological positioning of the research, participants were recruited from three cohorts to explore interactions between nested systems.</p> <p>Clear links are made with the extant literature and researchers highlight their contribution to the research corpus.</p> <p>The researchers clearly group their findings in relation to layers Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2001).</p> <p>Consistent with the qualitative position adopted the researchers acknowledge that the intention is not generalisability but to</p> |
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| | | | | <p>constructions could potentially increase withdrawal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The role of professionals and EPs in challenging stigmatising discourse and increasing sensitivity and understanding to carers and their families. | <p>make connections with the literature and highlight possible gaps and contribute to cumulative knowledge.</p> <p>Limitations and considerations: Young Carers were recruited from Young Carer projects. It has been noted that this is a convenient method to gain access to Young Carers, however research may potentially be missing Young Carers who do not access support. Researchers acknowledge that there is limited literature around the general population of young carers.</p> <p>young carers were required to be in full time education and over the age of 16. Given the statistics regarding education attainment and attendance, this may place limits on how many young carers were reached.</p> |
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| | | | | | <p>Young carers were approached by the project workers.</p> <p>Refers to Braun and Clarke's (2006) paper on thematic analysis, there are recent publications and revised editions which may be beneficial to draw upon.</p> <p>The research paper would possibly benefit from the inclusion of illustrative quotes in the findings section of the paper. This would be in keeping with the principles of transparency and coherence proposed by Yardley (2017).</p> |
| <p>Blake-Holmes, K. (2020). Understanding the needs of young carers in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic.</p> | <p>To research young carers experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic to consider support needs with a view to informing provision.</p> | <p>20 participants recruited through a social media platform and young carer organisations.</p> <p>Participants included,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8 young carers - 5 young adult carers | <p>The ontological and epistemological position is not specified.</p> <p>There is limited information about the process of data analysis.</p> | <p>Research highlighted the diversity in the caring role e.g., the care needs of the care recipient, how many people the CYP were caring for during the Covid-19 pandemic and the type of care tasks. This corroborates with existing literature, for example Gough and Gulliford (2020) highlight</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> <p>Ethical considerations are highlighted including respect and acknowledgement of CYPs wishes for example, a participant requested the presence of their brother during the interview.</p> |

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| | <p>To promote awareness of young carers and the potential impact of changes to service provision.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 parents of young carers - 4 youth workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Data was analysed from each sub-group of participants and combined to inform key emerging themes” (p.3). | <p>that young carers are not a homogenous group.</p> <p>A participant in the study referred to keeping the mental health needs of her mother “hidden” (p.3).</p> <p>A reported increase in caring responsibilities during the pandemic.</p> <p>Loss of routine due to lockdown for both parents and CYP was reported to be challenging.</p> <p>Challenges relating to practicalities e.g. access to shops and transport arrangements. Reduction or “withdrawn” informal support.</p> <p>Reported challenges relating to access to assessment of the family and young carers during in lockdown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Overwhelm” - “Uncertainty” - “Uneasy” <p>Highlighted participant accounts of school being a</p> | <p>CYP were recruited through young carers organisations, support was offered (via projects) to those taking part in the interview (during and after). Detail regarding anonymity is provided.</p> <p>The research article provides a section entitled “messages for young carers” which could be considered a strength in centralising the voice of CYP who took part in the research.</p> <p>Dissemination of findings is discussed including media coverage.</p> <p>Implications for practice are identified and discussed.</p> <p>Limitations: There is limited information regarding the process of data analysis.</p> |
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| | | | | <p>place for “respite”, a “break” or a place to “feel safe”. Teachers who “listen” Relationships e.g. “someone who noticed and someone who cared” (p.5). Varied contact with school/school staff was reported during the stay-at-home period. Positives were also reported regarding online support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of awareness of young carers needs was reported. Awareness raising was considered beneficial by young carers in the research e.g. raising awareness for “health, social care and educational services and staff, within the general public, and also, their own peer group” (p.5). <p>Raising awareness corroborates with literature (Kennan et al. 2012; Williams, 2016).</p> | <p>Data collection: the researcher took “detailed notes” during the interviews for the purpose of analysis. This could be considered a limitation, as arguably there could be bias in relation to what the researcher chose to record for the purpose of transcription. Moreover, detail from the interviews could be lost during the process of writing participant accounts. The researcher notes that key sections were transcribed, further information about the information that was considered to be key could aid transparency.</p> <p>Research took place with those accessing organisations. The researcher highlights that further research with those not accessing projects or support from organisations could be considered in future research.</p> |
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| | | | | <p>Challenges managing requirements of home learning (p.5).</p> <p>The impact of Covid-19 restrictions on social support was reported.</p> | |
| <p>Skovdal, M., and Andreouli, E. (2011). Using identity and recognition as a framework to understand and promote the resilience of caregiving children in western Kenya. <i>Journal of Social Policy</i>, 40(3), 613-630.</p> | <p>Researching local constructions of childhood with a focus on how constructions may facilitate agency and resiliency.</p> | <p>Secondary analysis of the data collected between 2006-2007</p> <p><i>Note: see summary note for s Skovdal M., Vincent Ogutu., Aoro, C., and Campbell C., (2009) young carers as social actors: coping strategies of children caring for ailing or ageing guardians in Western Kenya. Social Science and medicine, 69 (4), pp. 587-595.</i></p> | <p>Secondary analysis of the data collected between 2006-2007</p> <p><i>Note: see summary notes for Skovdal M., Vincent Ogutu., Aoro, C., and Campbell C., (2009) young carers as social actors: coping strategies of children caring for ailing or ageing guardians in Western Kenya. Social Science and medicine, 69 (4), pp. 587-595.</i></p> | <p>An association was highlighted between positive social recognition in relation to the caring role with positive social identity.</p> <p>This association was considered to increase resilience.</p> <p>Agency and active participation in community life is discussed with regard to resilience.</p> <p>The researcher discusses the role of the community with regard to viewing CYP in caring roles as social actors. This was considered to reinforce positive identity in relation to child caregiving.</p> | <p>Strengths:</p> <p>The researcher clarifies that the intention of the study is not to be representative of all caregivers in Africa which is consistent with the methodological position taken in the research. They also discuss possible limitations associated with adopting a lens based on resilience for example, potentially less emphasis on the challenges experienced. However, the researchers intended to highlight some psychological resources in relation to resilience to consider.</p> <p>Limitations</p> <p>Gatekeepers were required to identify CYP</p> |

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| | | | | | <p>who were providing “above average levels of support”, however there is limited information regarding what “above average” is considered to be.</p> <p>As noted above, and discussed by the researchers, the emphasis on resilience may be “shadowing” the reality of “difficult circumstances” (p.625). However, the researchers acknowledge this positioning and emphasise that the intention is to consider possible psychological resources.</p> <p>Note: <i>see summary notes for Skovdal M., Vincent Ogotu., Aoro, C., and Campbell C., (2009) young carers as social actors: coping strategies of children caring for ailing or ageing guardians in Western Kenya. Social Science and medicine, 69 (4), pp. 587-595.</i></p> |
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Appendix C: Gatekeeper letter EPS

Dear [Principal Educational Psychologist]

I am a trainee Educational Psychologist studying at Cardiff University. As partial fulfilment of my course requirements, I am required to carry out research to form my thesis. I am looking to research multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the views of young carers. The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of who young carers are and to consider possible approaches, tools or a framework that could be developed to help professionals and researchers to listen to the voices of young carers and to represent and promote their views.

I am writing to you to enquire whether you would grant permission for this research to be undertaken with Educational Psychologists in your service.

Participation will involve taking part in a focus group which will include up to six participants. Participants are required to be educational psychologists, secondary school/further education staff or young carer project/support workers. Professional groups will take part in a focus group together to gather a multi-agency perspective. Focus groups will take place via Microsoft Teams and will be recorded for the purpose of transcription. All information will be anonymised, and participants and settings will not be identifiable in any write up of the research or future publication.

Ethical approval has been granted by Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee and I will be closely supervised throughout this process by Dr Rachael Hayes, who is a professional tutor on the Cardiff Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme. Her contact details can be found below.

If you would be willing for the research to be undertaken, please could you forward the attached information sheet and consent form to educational psychologists in your service, and they can contact me directly to express an interest or to request further information. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Many thanks for your consideration of this project. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my research supervisor.

Kind regards,

Carla Manwaring

Trainee Educational Psychologist, Cardiff University.

Contact: JonesCS11@cardiff.ac.uk

Research supervisor: Dr Rachael Hayes

Email: HayesR4@Cardiff.ac.uk

This study has received full ethical approval from Cardiff University Ethics Committee. For more details regarding ethics and this project, or to make a complaint, please contact: School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 70 Park Place, Cardiff. CF10 3AT; Tel 029208 70707; Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix D – Gatekeeper letter young carer project/services

Dear [Project lead/coordinator]

I am a trainee educational psychologist studying at Cardiff University. As partial fulfilment of my course requirements, I am required to carry out research to form my thesis. I am looking to research multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the views of young carers. The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of who young carers are and to consider possible approaches, tools, or a framework that could be developed to help professionals and researchers to listen to the voices of young carers and to represent and promote their views.

I am writing to you to enquire whether you would grant permission for this research to be undertaken with young carer project/support workers from your service.

Participation will involve taking part in a focus group which will include up to six participants. Participants are required to be educational psychologists, secondary school/further education staff or young carer project/support workers. Professional groups will take part in a focus group together to gather a multi-agency perspective. Focus groups will take place via Microsoft Teams and will be recorded for the purpose of transcription. All information will be anonymised, and participants and settings will not be identifiable in any write up of the research or future publication.

Ethical approval has been granted by Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee and I will be closely supervised throughout this process by Dr Rachael Hayes, who is a professional tutor on the Cardiff Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme. Her contact details can be found below.

If you would be willing, please could you share the attached information sheet and consent form to members of staff in your setting, and they can contact me directly to express an interest or to request further information. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Many thanks for your consideration of this project. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my research supervisor.

Kind regards,

Carla Manwaring

Trainee Educational Psychologist, Cardiff University.

Contact: JonesCS11@cardiff.ac.uk

Research supervisor: Dr Rachael Hayes

Email: HayesR4@cardiff.ac.uk

This study has received full ethical approval from Cardiff University Ethics Committee. For more details regarding ethics and this project, or to make a complaint, please contact: School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 70 Park Place, Cardiff. CF10 3AT; Tel 029208 70707; Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix E: Gatekeeper letter schools/FE colleges

Dear [Head Teacher/FE coordinator]

I am a trainee educational psychologist studying at Cardiff University. As partial fulfilment of my course requirements, I am required to carry out research to form my thesis. I am looking to research multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the views of young carers. The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of who young carers are and to consider possible approaches, tools, or a framework that could be developed to help professionals and researchers to listen to the voices of young carers and to represent and promote their views.

I am writing to you to enquire whether you would grant permission for this research to be undertaken with members of staff in your setting.

Participation will involve taking part in a focus group which will include up to six participants. Participants are required to be educational psychologists, secondary school/further education staff or young carer project/support workers. Professional groups will take part in a focus group together to gather a multi-agency perspective. Focus groups will take place via Microsoft Teams and will be recorded for the purpose of transcription. All information will be anonymised, and participants and settings will not be identifiable in any write up of the research or future publication.

Ethical approval has been granted by Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee and I will be closely supervised throughout this process by Dr Rachael Hayes, who is a professional tutor on the Cardiff Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme. Her contact details can be found below.

If you would be willing, please could you share the attached information sheet and consent form to members of staff in your setting, and they can contact me directly to express an interest or to request further information. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Many thanks for your consideration of this project. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my research supervisor.

Kind regards,

Carla Manwaring

Trainee Educational Psychologist, Cardiff University.


Contact: JonesCS11@cardiff.ac.uk

Research supervisor Dr Rachael Hayes

Email: HayesR4@Cardiff.ac.uk

This study has received full ethical approval from Cardiff University Ethics Committee. For more details regarding ethics and this project, or to make a complaint, please contact: School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 70 Park Place, Cardiff. CF10 3AT; Tel 029208 70360; Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk


Research opportunity



CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD

For Educational Psychologists, School/FE Staff and Young Carer support/project workers

This research is being conducted as part of a doctoral thesis by Carla Manwaring, a trainee Educational Psychologist at Cardiff University. This project aims to explore ways of collecting and representing the views of Young Carers by taking a multi-agency perspective.



Please consider taking part if you meet the following criteria

- You are a staff member currently working in a mainstream secondary school or a Further Education College in the UK
- or
- You are an Educational Psychologist working for an Educational Psychology Service in the UK
- or
- You work for a Young Carer project or support group in the UK
- and
- You have/had experience of working with a child or young person who you consider to be a Young Carer.
- You have an interest in developing practice around representing and promoting the voices of Young Carers.
- You are willing for the researcher to feedback discussion ideas with Young Carers.

Participation will involve taking part in a focus group interview with up to five other participants via Microsoft Teams. The focus group will last between 1 hour and 1 hour 30 minutes.

To express an interest or to request further information please contact Carla Manwaring
Email: JonesCS11@cardiff.ac.uk

Research supervisor: Dr Rachael Hayes, DEdPsy Professional Tutor
Email: HayesR4@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix G: Information sheet

An Appreciative Inquiry: Multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the voice of the young carer.

You are invited to participate in this research project. Before deciding whether to take part please take time to read the following information.

Who is carrying out this study?

My name is Carla Manwaring and I am carrying out this research study as part of my Doctoral qualification in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University. I am being supervised by Dr Rachael Hayes, Professional Tutor for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University.

What is the aim of the study?

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of who young carers are and to explore possible techniques, approaches, tools or framework that could be developed to help professionals and researchers to listen to the voices of young carers and to represent and promote their views. It is hoped that this research will lead to consideration of approaches, tools or a framework to share and equip those working with young carers. This research is informed by Appreciative Inquiry, specifically the "5 D model" to explore positive aspects, what may be working well and best practice with the aim of taking steps toward "aspirations future" (Rowett 2012, p.52).

Please consider taking part if you meet the following criteria:

- You are an educational psychologist working for an Educational Psychology Service in the UK

Or

- You are a staff member currently working in a mainstream secondary school or Further Education College in the UK

Or

- You work for a young carer project or support group in the UK

and

- You have/had experience of working with a child or young person who you consider to be a Young Carer.
- You have an interest in developing practice around representing promoting the voices of young carers.
- You are willing for the researcher to feedback discussion ideas with young carers.

What will participating involve?

Participation will involve taking part in a focus group interview with up to 5 other participants via Microsoft Teams. When the researcher has obtained consent from between 4-6 participants a date for the focus group will be arranged. The focus group will be recorded for the purpose of transcription. The transcription will be anonymised to ensure that any identifying information is removed. Names will be replaced with pseudonyms.

The focus group will last between 1 hour and 1 hour and 30 minutes. You do not have to answer all questions if you do not wish to. During the focus group the breakout room function will be used for paired or triad discussions. During the focus group please do not name children or colleagues.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is voluntary, and you can decide whether you would like to take part. You can also withdraw your participation at any point up until the focus groups have been transcribed. At this point the information will be anonymised and therefore it will not be possible to identify you from the focus group data. Choosing not to participate or choosing to withdraw will not result in any negative consequences.

What are the possible benefits or risks of taking part?

I am hoping to gather multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the views of young carers with a view to consider possible approaches, tools or a framework. While there are no identified immediate benefits, it is hoped that research may contribute to practice relating to pupil voice specifically representing and promoting the views of young carers. It is hoped that discussions will later be shared with young carers. There are no identified risks to taking part. You can withdraw for any reason before, during or after participation (within a 2 week period).

Will my information be kept anonymous and confidential?

Yes. The information provided will be held in compliance with GDPR regulations. Cardiff University is the data controller and James Merrifield is the data protection officer (inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). The lawful basis for processing this information is public interest. This information is being collected by Carla Manwaring.

The information on the consent form will be held securely and separately from the research information. Only the researcher and research supervisor will have access to this form and it will be destroyed after 7 years.

The research information you provide will be used for the purposes of research only and will be stored securely. Another trainee educational psychologist will be in attendance throughout the focus group interview. Their role is to voice record any paired or triad discussions which take place in the break out room.

Only Carla Manwaring, the facilitator and research supervisor will have access to this information. After 14 days the data will be anonymised (any identifying elements removed) and this anonymous information may be kept indefinitely or published.

What happens to the results of the project?

This research will be used for the purpose of the researcher's thesis which will be submitted to the University. It may also be shared in presentations with students, lecturers and Educational Psychologists as part of the DEdPsy programme of study. The anonymised data may also be used for further research projects. Research findings may be shared through publication and discussed in conferences. Participants will not be identifiable in any publication as identifiable information will be removed during the transcription phase and pseudonyms will be used.

Who is supervising this research?

Dr Rachael Hayes, a professional tutor on the DEdPsy course will be supervising the researcher for the duration of the project.

What do I need to do next?

Thank you for taking the time to read information about this research. If you agree to take part in this research, please complete the consent form and return it via email to JonesCS11@cardiff.ac.uk

A date and time will then be arranged for the focus group to take place. This will be communicated with you via the contact information you provide.

If you have any further questions please contact the researcher Carla Manwaring via email:

JonesCS11@cardiff.ac.uk

Or research supervisor, email address: HayesR4@cardiff.ac.uk

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University. If you have any concerns or complaints about the research, you can contact the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee in writing at:

Secretary to the Research Ethics Committee

School of Psychology Tower Building

70 Park Place

Cardiff CF10 3AT

psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix H Consent document

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

An Appreciative Inquiry: Multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the voice of the young carer.

Consent Form – Confidential data

Name of participant:

Job title/position held:

After reading the participant information sheet, please read the statements below. If you agree to take part, please sign, and return this document to Carla Manwaring (researcher), email address: JonesCS11@cardiff.ac.uk

| |
|--|
| I have read and understood the information provided in the information sheet and understand that my responses will be used as part of the research project described. |
| I understand what will happen during the focus group |
| I understand the activity will be video-recorded, and all conversation (unless stated) during the focus group interview will be transcribed by the researcher. |
| I understand that another facilitator will be joining the focus group to record break out room discussions. |
| I understand that the video-recording will be deleted two weeks after the focus group |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary |
| I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any point (up until the video-recording is deleted), without the need to provide an explanation. |
| I understand that if I want to withdraw, I can inform the researcher in person or via email. |
| I understand that I will be assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity of both myself and the setting of which I am an employee. |
| I agree to maintain the confidentiality of issues discussed during the focus group and will not discuss these with others outside of the focus group. |
| I understand that personal data will be processed in accordance with GDPR regulations. Privacy statement The information provided will be held in compliance with GDPR regulations. Cardiff University is the data controller and James Merrifield is the data protection officer (inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). The lawful basis for processing this information is public interest. This information is being collected by Carla Manwaring. The information on the consent form will be held securely and separately from the research information. Only the researcher and research supervisor will have access to this form and it will be destroyed after 7 years. The research information you provide will be used for the purposes of research only and will be stored securely. Another Trainee Educational Psychologist will be in attendance throughout the focus group interview as a facilitator. Their role is to voice record any paired or triad discussions which take place in the breakout room. Only Carla Manwaring, the research supervisor and the facilitator will have access to this information. After 14 days the data will be anonymised (any identifying elements removed) and this anonymous information may be kept indefinitely or published. |
| I understand that the anonymised data may be used for further research projects without the need for additional consent procedures. |
| I consent to the findings from this research being shared with individuals in other organisations outside of Cardiff University for the purpose of potential publication. |
| I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information about the study. |

I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Carla Manwaring, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Dr Rachael Hayes.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Researcher contact details:

Carla Manwaring

School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3EU.

Email: JonesCS11@cardiff.ac.uk

Research supervisor contact details:

Dr Rachael Hayes

School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3EU.

Email: HayesR4@Cardiff.ac.uk

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University. If you have any concerns or complaints about the research you can contact the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee in writing at:

Secretary to the Research Ethics Committee

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70 Park Place

Cardiff CF10 3AT

psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix I - Pre-focus group script

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research today, I appreciate the time that you are taking. The aim of the research today is to gain as much information as possible in relation to your thoughts about who young carers are and to consider ways to collect, represent and promote the voices of young carers.

As this focus group is taking place via Microsoft Teams I appreciate that there may be times where it is difficult for everyone to be heard for example possible challenges with internet connection, so it may be helpful to mute microphones until you would like to talk, you could also use the “raise your hand function” if you would like to say something or if it is challenging to interject. This might help to support everyone to have a space to share their thoughts and views.

Please also make use of the chat function if you would like to. I may use it to post questions after asking them so that we can refer back to them but it may also be a helpful way to add comments. Please be aware that the default option for the chat function is set to share with the group.

In a moment I will begin recording, this recording will be saved on my personal password protected laptop, the research facilitator will also be audio recording breakout room discussions via their password protected mobile phone. Following the focus group a process of transcription will take place over the next two weeks. If you would like to change your mind about your participation in the research or would like to withdraw your contribution, it is important to let me know within the two-week time frame, after this the recording will be deleted and it will not be possible to withdraw. Your names or any identifying information will be removed and will be anonymised. Please remember that it is important that information shared or identifying information including participants names are not shared with anyone outside the group. Anonymised findings will be shared with you in an report on completion of the research.

The focus group will be approximately one hour to an hour and a half, I am aware that I do not want to restrict the flow of conversations, but I will also be mindful of time as I am aware of your other commitments.

The focus group is voluntary, if you change your mind and decide that you would like to withdraw, you can drop out of the meeting whenever you would like to.

Does anyone have any questions?

Appendix J: Participant debrief form

Title: An Appreciative Inquiry: Multi-agency perspectives on representing and promoting the voice of the young carer.

Thank you for participating in this research. The aim of this research was to consider the term “young carer” and to consider possible approaches, tools, or a framework that could be developed to help professionals and researchers to listen to the voices of Young Carers and to represent and promote their views.

To explore this, you were asked to take part in a focus group. Information from this will be analysed using Thematic Analysis to identify themes. Before participating in this research, you were provided with an information sheet and were asked to provide signed informed consent. This included giving consent to being video recorded for the purpose of transcription and for the researcher to analyse and interpret the data.

All the responses given will be anonymised, and no personal or identifiable information will be included in the results and final research report. All data will be kept securely and confidentially on a password protected device, before being submitted. If you decide to withdraw your data please contact the researcher within 14 days. It will not be possible to withdraw your data once the transcription process has taken place as you will no longer be identifiable from the transcribed data.

The information you have provided will help to form the researcher’s thesis. This will be submitted to the University as partial fulfilment of the course requirement. If you would be interested in receiving further information regarding the results of the research, information and outcomes can be made available once the research report has been written and the Doctorate in Educational Psychology assessment process has been completed. The anonymised data may be used for further research projects. Should the findings be of interest, they may also be shared through publication of the research and discussed in conferences. Please contact the researcher or research supervisor if you have any concerns or questions about the research.

Kind regards,

Carla Manwaring

Researcher contact details:

Carla Manwaring

School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3EU.

Email: JonesCS11@cardiff.ac.uk

Research supervisor contact details:

Dr Rachael Hayes

School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3EU.

Email: HayesR4@Cardiff.ac.uk

The information provided will be held in compliance with GDPR regulations. Cardiff University is the data controller and James Merrifield is the data protection officer (inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). The lawful basis for processing this information is public interest.

Appendix K Stages of TA

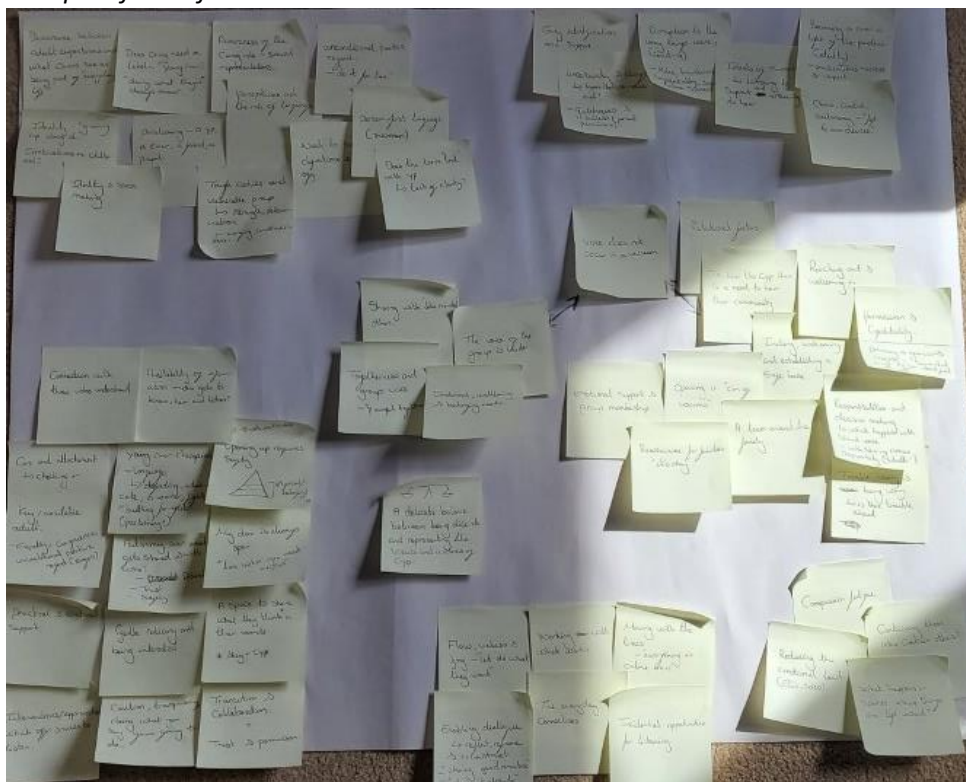
Stage 1: Familiarisation with the data

This stage began during transcription. I listened to the recordings and ensured that they were replayed several times to ensure accurate transcription, and also to immerse myself in the data. I wanted to make sure that captured depth of the content. Notes were initially taken relating to casual observations and semantic meaning before engaging analytically with the data (Braun and Clarke, 2020). This process provided a space for reflexivity as I became aware of possible assumptions and my positioning in relation to the data. Initial noticing, observations and reflections were recorded in my research journal and on post it notes as illustrated in Figure 8. The focus group transcription was read several times and reflections were also shared in supervision. Supervision was a space to share initial thoughts and wonderings. My research journal helped me to record areas of curiosity but also helped me to reflect on possible assumptions about the data. Although subjectivity is encouraged by Braun and Clarke (2020) comparing analytic observations was felt to enrich the experience.

Stage 2: Generating codes

Figure 8

Example of data familiarisation



Stage 3: Initial theme generation

I added illustrative quotes from the transcription into Table 17 Colour coding was used for the initial generation of themes.

At this stage, I held in mind three questions proposed by Braun and Clarke (2020),

1. Is this a candidate theme which is relevant to my research questions and provides a compelling account of data?
2. Does the candidate theme capture more than one or two data items? However, it was important to note that frequency was the sole criteria.
3. Is there a central organising concept which captures the essence of what the theme is about? For example, a pattern of meaning that tells the reader something about it.

(p.137).

Table 17

Initial Theme Generation

| Transcript extracts | What is the essence of this data? | Developing and reviewing |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Whereas in COVID we couldn't do any of that and all we had was a Teams and then often or not you'll be talking with the families because they are in the same room. You've got dogs running past like I've seen screaming kids, so it was a big, very, very difficult period for them with the support wasn't there (P1)</p> <p>Obviously with COVID beyond being able to transport, but we've just made it so that all the young carers, it's near enough that we can sort of um accommodate them so that they can come along because they really like coming, like I said, they build friendships with others and they get it to share their own experiences, have down time (P3)</p> <p>Because like (Participant 2) said with Covid and everything you know, we had to think, reinvent things then and now we keep in touch with young carers and you notice like, especially with you, (Participant 2), and you know if it's a young person coming in and they look a little bit dishevelled or tired, you couldn't, you couldn't recognize that with Covid (P1)</p> <p>I think as well with young carers, obviously the parent or siblings were um sort of had to isolate as well permanently because of the illnesses and everything and their immune system. So I think they were sort of just, you know they can whereas you got people who are going out for like walks and things like I think they were sort of trapped when they in their home environment because of the isolation (P2)</p> <p>I definitely think you know, they were one of the groups that had it the hardest with Covid, you know, I would imagine lots of them didn't even leave the house (P2)</p> <p>I do think you know some good things have come out of lock down and like this for example (focus group), and like teams, you know, if we didn't have this, where would we be then? (P2)</p> | <p>Change, barriers, and adaptations</p> | <p>Covid-19 – changes to practice, boundaries shifting and changing.</p> <p>Safeguarding, confidentiality and looking in.</p> <p>Shifts in how things were e.g. practice and identity</p> |
| <p>The pandemic really hit them for six and we had more young carers then because of people like with long COVID or complications from Covid, so we've seen a dramatic rise (P1)</p> <p>No, quite right. Because we had one on young carer here who was afraid to leave the house and isolated because you know their dad couldn't (P2)</p> <p>Their attendance really dipped, and we might have to have like other support to try to get them back into school, obviously we started you know, if it's optional (P2)</p> | <p>Becoming a carer and the impact on those who care</p> | |

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| <p>I've been doing it for about I would say, probably about 3-4 years now, but obviously the pandemic took a chunk out of that and so I think things were going really well and they sort of we had this uh big gap in between and it's just sort of getting things sort of back on the go now, you know, trying to start the groups and things back up (P2)</p> <p>Now you realize you think, oh my gosh, I could see that learner now I can see how they thrive here, they're back in college. They love being here it back with a group that that's their voice that's their power together (P1)</p> | <p>Returning to the way things were</p> | |
| <p>Even schools are way more aware now of, um, of young carers cuz it was sort of known as the hidden army of young carers wasn't it and it's surprising when I last finished my, the primary school I was in, we pretty much had near enough from reception so reception year one to year six a young carer in every class, pretty much from the assessment that we were doing (P3)</p> <p>They didn't wanna highlight themselves. So the badges was a no (P4)</p> <p>I think thinking back of one particular family that I supported, um, both children were absolutely young carers, um, and I went to complete the assessment that we do within (name of service) anyway, cuz it was to identify all the needs, uh, within the family. But when sort of discussing that there's a young carers assessment and can be done with the children to know that they've identified as young carers, but they were both quite reluctant to do it. Cause they didn't want to be labelled as young carers or identified because it was just like they have grown up in that role (P3)</p> <p>Just having that conversation and speaking about it openly and we spoke earlier about it where they were sort of the hidden army where it wasn't sort of known and it was really surprising of how many young carers there actually are (P3)</p> <p>Early identification um um really, you know, support in place straight away...</p> <p>Financial help. Uhm, it is such a burden on family and everything we get like the person being cared for might call us and be in tears feeling so guilty um whereas we could support the young carers but sometimes the family, then are feeling so traumatised (P1)</p> | <p>A hidden army</p> | <p>A shared language? Social constructions, representations, identity.</p> <p>Being culturally and community sensitive and specific.</p> <p>Guilt Stigma</p> <p>Safety to enable dialogue</p> |
| <p>They just don't want to be treated any differently, they want to be the same as everybody else (P2)</p> <p>So, you know, they tend to just get on with their day, if you know what I mean, they don't, you know, highlight anything (p4)</p> <p>As part of the assessment it says things that you like about it and uh things that you don't like and ones stuck with me was like nothing. I love it all I love doing every bit of it (P3)</p> | <p>Person first language and approaches</p> | |

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| <p>I think I don't want them to be put off by you know thinking you know, I can't make it in because I need to take my siblings to school, so I'm not gonna be able to make it for 9 o'clock all of that. It is, you know, acceptable. So they come in late they finish early or whatever or if they need to go, we got a crisis plan. So if we need to get them home early, if something has gone wrong and then they'll have a taxi home. You know, we make sure that we can get them back to the family. So there's loads of things and like it's whatever is unique to yourselves. Like you do that to help them. So... (P1)</p> <p>Um I think knowing that, that a young person and whether or not they want to be able to share their own views and stuff, rather than sort of being forceful with it and putting them on the spot. It's just knowing that they're comfortable in those situations to be able to share that's helpful (P3)</p> | | |
| <p>That's the ones who we identified because sometimes on induction we can ask them um are you a young carer and they say, oh yes I'm on a care course or I work in a care home um so it's very difficult for them to identify (P1).</p> <p>So people need to recognize oh yeah, I fit in that category before they come to college (P1)</p> <p>There are some who don't want to be identified at all (P2)</p> <p>Uh you know even though some of them don't want to be identified (P2)</p> <p>But when sort of discussing that there's a young carers assessment and can be done with the children to know that they've identified as young carers, but they were both quite reluctant to do it. Cause they didn't want to be labelled as young carers or identified because it was just like they have grown up in that role (P3)</p> | <p>Identity and language– do definitions and terms “land” with those they seek to describe?</p> | |
| <p>Um people under 25, young people who care for um a relative or sibling, something like that, and on a daily basis with all activities of daily living (P1)</p> <p>We've got some sibling carers as well or on roll with us so you know some children who helped look after the they're siblings because of certain disabilities. And we've also got some children who may not um have a huge caring role at home with regards to like housework and things like that but who worry um emotionally, um they're mostly impacted by parents (P2)</p> <p>Just basically there is a need to just simplify it really (P1)</p> | <p>A need for simplicity to capture what caring is</p> | |
| <p>They are a vulnerable group and there is something special about them. They are tough little cookies (P1)</p> | <p>Tough cookies – strength, determination, and resilience</p> | |

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| <p>We highlight you know things like Carers Action day, Carers action week. Anything like that is promoted, and learner led (P1)</p> <p>We do young carers packs Uh, I think they get all sorts of support and tools that help them (P1)</p> <p>Provide them with young carers badges (P3)</p> <p>They very much enjoy what they do. The majority of them are really proud and they really, they like, they like to do the role, um, which is really good (P3)</p> <p>Even schools are way more aware now (P3)</p> <p>I think for staff now being aware and those young carers ID badges (P3)</p> <p>I think they do young carers events as well globally on the (.) with young carers festivals and stuff, which provide that platform, I think for the young carers to voice, uh, their feelings and opinions on things and, and their wants on perhaps could be done differently, and I think that's just growing and growing every year now, isn't it? (P3)</p> <p>I think thinking back of one particular family that I supported, um, both children were absolutely young carers, um, and I went to complete the assessment that we do within (name of service) anyway, cuz it was to identify all the needs, uh, within the family. But when sort of discussing that there's a young carers assessment and can be done with the children to know that they've identified as young carers, but they were both quite reluctant to do it. Cause they didn't want to be labelled as young carers or identified because it was just like they have grown up in that role (P3).</p> <p>Were most definitely young carers, with the roles and things that they did administering medication and stuff and the one was being trained but when it came to completing my young carers assessment, they were both quite reluctant to want to be identified and sort of labelled as young carers 'cause they had grown up in that role and it was what they've always known (P3)</p> <p>just having that conversation and speaking about it openly and we spoke earlier about it where they were sort of the hidden army where it wasn't sort of known and it was really surprising of how many young carers there actually are (P3)</p> <p>And I think it's uh schools having that understanding because one of my other young carers was really struggling with in school to oh uh struggling with homework at home to complete that homework and school and have now allowed them to do it within a quiet break time or a little bit at the end of lunch so that she hasn't got our worry if I can't</p> | <p>Awareness of caring and social representations</p> | |
|--|---|--|

complete my homework. But she knows that school are aware, or she's able to complete it in school and if she needs to. And I think it's little things like that and that make that massive difference (P3)

Early identification um really, you know, support in place straight away...

Financial help. Uhm, it is such a burden on family and everything we get like the person being cared for might call us and be in tears feeling so guilty um whereas we could support the young carers but sometimes the family, then are feeling so traumatised (P1)

I think some sort of uh parents and carers having that understanding that that you know needing help from your child is actually OK, you know, you're not going to get in trouble with children services. And you know, there is dedicated help out there and I think that way more children will sort of come through as well. 'cause as I said without the permission of parents and carers, we're unable to work with the children and I think there is a lot of stigma around it and the fact that they feel they're going to get into a lot of trouble because of it (P2)

I think it's peer support as well of yeah, other young people understanding the role and the impact that it can have and peers being supportive of that and having a really good awareness and understanding of the young carers role 'cause, it's not just, it varies, doesn't it (P3)

Do you know, I think television helps as well. Do you know people like a soap this featuring in a young carer and a couple of them um, but it just touched upon it and I think it's a big role that that could be explored. Uhm, but it just it needs highlighting. (P1)

They'd notice that it's uh people are being more aware of it and they are more understanding 'cause we do like young carers week and things and we sort of um promote (P3)

As soon as they come into the college, the campus we've got a massive banner so that's the first thing that they see and young people you know young carers, it's got one of them pop up stands, you know, and the early identification then so that they know where to go and or who to tell that they might need some additional support (P1)

I think just going forward with the website because um at the I think is like one or two words to say that we support young carers so I think it is going to be all singing all dancing to know that they are supported and recognized in college. So I think that that's the way we're going forward because everything is online now and if you're looking for a college or where to go, the application is or online and you can look around what support is being offered young carers will almost have that section and that's where when we have interviews with the young carers from the college we can show the activities that they do in. We can show how young carers have got into employment and things like that and all the things that are positive and you know so you think Oh yeah, that's that's a good place to go. I know I'm gonna be supported. (P1)

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| | | |
| <p>But half the time, these young people don't even realize they are carers because they've grown up doing it and they just think they're helping around the house (P1)</p> <p>They just don't want to be treated any differently, they want to be the same as everybody else (P2)</p> <p>But I think oh wow, that's the pampering they deserve (P1)</p> <p>But all of that goes on our website detail. You know you you've gotta highlight things (P1)</p> <p>I think for staff now being aware and those young carers ID badges (P3)</p> <p>With the comp obviously they didn't wanna highlight themselves. So the badges was a no (P4)</p> <p>I think thinking back of one particular family that I supported, um, both children were absolutely young carers, um, and I went to complete the, the assessment that we do within (name of service) anyway, cuz it was to identify all the needs, uh, within the family.</p> <p>But when sort of discussing that there's a young carers assessment and can be done with the, the, the children to know that they've identified as young carers, but they were both quite reluctant to do it. Cause they didn't want to be labelled as young carers or identified because it was just like they have grown up in that role (p3)</p> <p>Were most definitely young carers, with the roles and things that they did administering medication and stuff and the one was being trained but when it came to completing my young carers assessment, they were both quite reluctant to want to be identified and sort of labelled as young carers 'cause they had grown up in that role and it was what they've always known (P3)</p> <p>As part of the assessment it says things that you like about it and uh things that you don't like and ones stuck with me was like nothing. I love it all I love doing every bit of it (P3)</p> <p>They are proud (P1)</p> <p>I think some sort of uh parents and carers having that understanding that that you know needing help from your child is actually OK, you know, you're not going to get in trouble with children services and you know, there is dedicated help out there and I think that way more children will sort of come through as well. 'cause as I said without the permission of parents and carers, we're unable to work with the children and I think there is a lot of stigma around it and the fact that they feel they're going to get into a lot of trouble because of it (P2)</p> | <p>Constructions and identity</p> | |

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| <p>I liked (participant 1) where you said that when the the first thing they see when they walk into their college is the banner that sort of says about young carers and I think that's a nice, discrete way if they want it 'cause some are very, quite open about it and some don't tend to wanna talk about that (P3)</p> | | |
| <p>They've got ELSA, they've got nurture. So you know they can access all of that (P2)</p> <p>Provide them with young carers badges (P3)</p> <p>Youth clubs that they can attend weekly, um, respite activities (P3)</p> <p>We have a wellbeing room in the school, so, um, we are lucky enough to I'm working there full time. So if there is any need for the young carers to chat, um, they just come along to the room (P4)</p> <p>Um, they can have a 10 minute slot or they can stay for a full lesson or depending on what needs, you know, for the day (P4)</p> <p>Um, we also provide, I like ELSA support in the room (P4)</p> <p>They just got a room for them to regulate (P4)</p> <p>So if they're just having a bit of a bad day or they're late, you know, we provide uniform. If they need uniform, you know, if they've forgotten anything, then we've got things on hand or them to use without worrying about it (P4)</p> <p>So the badges was a no, but they know they have the support (p4)</p> <p>Enjoying things is fantastic to see like we've got a wellbeing garden and you know, we'd have any done at the moment, but you know, just before lockdown we bought lot of seeds and we had the kids going out and planting them and then looking after them watering them and you know, and it's just, and once they they've grown then, they were able to take them home to their families. So, you know, they could see the benefit of it then, and there was a little present to them, so it made them feel good about themselves (P4)</p> <p>If we can see that and identify that they're looking like a little bit upset or we've actually spoken to the parent or, and there really is concerns, we can then go out and do some direct work then like ELSA, um, or just generally go out and doing a couple of sessions with them and sort of, and unpicking what it is that's happening, re-reassuring them and things, depending on what it is that's bothering them I suppose (P3)</p> | <p>Practical and emotional support</p> | <p>Relational factors, trust and connection</p> <p>It's about who not the tool</p> |

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| <p>Hasn't got our worry if I can't complete my homework. But she knows that school are aware, or she's able to complete it in school and if she needs to and I think it's little things like that and that make that massive difference for them (P3).</p> <p>So we're really flexible again and just because they've told us what they want. They want to be able to come in late or, you know, they could just grab breakfast or, you know, whatever, but it's all about them and we work around them. Really so that they can, you know, and their education. (P1)</p> <p>It might have some mindfulness colouring book and little hot chocolate um fidgets and things and all and just like a nice little bag full of goodies (P3)</p> <p>I think I don't want them to be put off by you know thinking you know, I can't make it in because I need to take my siblings to school, so I'm not gonna be able to make it for 9 o'clock all of that. It is, you know, acceptable. So they come in late they finish early or whatever or if they need to go, we got a crisis plan. So if we need to get them home early, if something has gone wrong and then they'll have a taxi home. You know, we make sure that we can get them back to the family. So there's loads of things and like it's whatever is unique to yourselves (P1)</p> | | |
| <p>The learner voice is used you know, to voice this could be improved or I'm happy with this or you know, whatever and some teachers are really, really good you know they would go out their way (P1)</p> <p>Listening to them, we do sometimes provide feedback purposes and do like forums, which gives them a sort of opportunities to, to say, well, what things they would like from our service then what activities they would like, what types of respite care they'd like, um, and activities that we can provide (P3)</p> <p>They had grown up in that role and it was what they've always known. Umm so I just sort of said, oh, like there will be a young carers ID badge, we provide different opportunities such as youth clubs and stuff. You can get to speak to others and they don't sort of go out much either to be honest. Um so they were sort of accepting of it and we went through the assessment and they now got the young carers badges and which they happy with and they have also started to attend the youth clubs that we've got on and made some really lovely friendships with others um ... and they wanna come along and they want to go on the trips that we're providing and different things (P3)</p> <p>That's really lovely and they really love it and it's what they want. So when we do our like forums with them and ask and we sort of see what is that they want and then if we can do it here, we'll definitely do our best (P3)</p> <p>knowing that their um the person or sibling or whoever that they care for is gonna be safe and looked after because there's already that additional support in place for them to be able to go on and do those things that they need (P1)</p> | <p>Transparency and doing what you say you're going to do</p> | |

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| <p>I think it's a seeing that they enjoy coming along to our groups. Um, they, they will say the things that they want and, and more often than not, that's what we'll sort of provide for them. Or if there is a problem, we'll do our best to sort of resolve that, um, by doing something ourselves or speaking with the, the family or speaking to an outside agency, maybe that could also offer support. So they know that, or they have what they want and what they need. Um, people are around them, supporting them as best that they can to meet their needs (P3)</p> <p>Having those check-in sessions with them. So it gives them that time to talk to us. Um, and then eventually them not using the wellbeing room so much because they feel here, they feel like they've had their needs (P4)</p> | | |
| <p>I've been tasked with revamping the website, so I'm gonna have on there now um young carers speaking about their role like a video and lots of like a handbook (P1)</p> <p>So there's always lots of events going on. Um, but we go out and support them and listen to them (P3)</p> <p>I think they do young carers events as well globally on the (.) with young carers festivals and stuff, which provide that platform, I think for the young carers to voice, uh, their feelings and opinions on things and, and they're wants on perhaps could be done differently, and I think that's just growing and growing every year now, isn't it? (P4)</p> <p>I find just, just generally chatting and, and talking, um, is better, um, with them directly openly honestly (P3)</p> <p>They build friendships with others and they get it to share their own experiences, have down time (P3)</p> <p>I suppose, to naturally when they're busy doing other things to sort of speak about what they're feeling and what perhaps they, what they like, what they don't like, what they'd like to sort of see more of (P3)</p> | <p>A space to share in their own words</p> | |
| <p>Also once all our trust is sort of built up, they can share any concern that they have for us then as support workers to maybe put some other additional support in place (P3)</p> <p>I think it might be different for you because of the age range, but we've gotta have parental consent and I think sometimes parents are very worries that they're going to get into trouble (P2)</p> <p>I find just, just generally chatting and, and talking, um, is better, um, with them directly openly honestly (P3)</p> | <p>Being trustworthy. Opening requires safety.</p> <p>Who knows, who listens and who hears?</p> | |

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| <p>It is trust in as well. Isn't it? They, they feel that trust in you that, or if there is anything that's going on at all, they know they can come to you as that person and you can sort it out for them throughout the day in the school, you know, environment (P4)</p> | | |
| <p>They've got ELSA, they've got nurture. So you know they can access all of that, you know we've got (name of service) counsellors on site, so they can access that and as you said you know they are quite happy to (P2)</p> <p>Respite for them to sort of have their downtime and their, um, just time for their selves (P3)</p> <p>I think it's just sort of checking in with them then (P3)</p> <p>We have a wellbeing room in the school, so, um, we are lucky enough to I'm working there full time. So if there is any need for the young carers to chat, um, they can just come along to the room (P4)</p> <p>Um, they can have a 10 minute slot or they can stay for a full lesson or depending on what needs, you know, for the day (P4)</p> <p>They just got a room for them to regulate (P4)</p> <p>So the badges was a no, but they know they have the support (P4)</p> <p>We sort of run youth clubs and weekly, um, and the children come along. Um, and that's their chance, I suppose, just to sort of have a chat and we can say how things going, how's mam, and that's their time then to be able to talk about it, but then sometimes that's their time to not have to talk about that as well (P3)</p> <p>Really nice for them to come out and do those activities together and again, that allows that conversation, I suppose, to naturally when they're busy doing other things to sort of speak about what they're feeling and what perhaps they, what they like, what they don't like, what they'd like to sort of see more of (P3)</p> <p>In, school, um, we have the time out system, so we give them a card which is allocated to each child. So, um, if they're having a bad day, then they can use that as say their break out room. So they can use that when they're in class and then they can come down and they know they've got that time with the one to one. So that's a very good tool in school (P4)</p> <p>So we support and promote young carers and we offer some safe spaces for them to come along, to have a little bit of respite from their caring role, regular um and we've actually got the youth clubs now sort of dotted around (P3)</p> | <p>Open doors and safe spaces</p> | |

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| <p>Yeah it's reassurance for them isn't it you know for them to know yeah I recognise and I know that I can go somewhere if I need to. I can just explain. This is my role. This is what I do (P3)</p> <p>But at the moment you think poor dab you know you can support them, you know when they are in they can have hot food and there is people there for them to chat to (P1)</p> <p>having those check-in sessions with them. So it gives them that time to talk to us. Um, and then eventually them not using the wellbeing room so much because they feel here, they feel like they've had their needs met (P4)</p> | | |
| <p>Once all our trust is sort of built up, they can share any concern that they have for us then as support workers to maybe put some other additional support in place (P3)</p> <p>We have a wellbeing room in the school, so, um, we are lucky enough to I'm working there full time. So if there is any need for the young carers to chat, um, they can just come along to the room (P4)</p> <p>Most of the time I go and find them to just have, you know, everything okay. Just a little smile, you know, just to let 'em know where we are, if they need us through the day (P4)</p> <p>We have a great pastor and manager who was always letting the staff know if there's any issues throughout the day with any children. Um, so all staff are aware of, you know (P4)</p> <p>Relationship with staff to where everyone is on board and looking out for that child (P4)</p> <p>The children know that they can come out to have their time and then they speak on a one-to-one basis with myself or a colleague (P4)</p> <p>I think (participants') school are doing it already, is having that, um, welcoming environment and staff who are approachable, that can sort of speak to staff that they know who've got that good understanding of the young carer and the role and what it could entail and what impact it could have on their daily life (P3)</p> <p>And it is trust in as well. Isn't it? They, they feel that trust in you, or if there is anything that's going on at all, they know they can come to you as that person and you can sort it out for them throughout the day in the school, you know, environment (P4)</p> | <p>Key/available adults</p> | |
| <p>So we're looking at doing different activities like oh we, we got some crazy stuff going on next week for health and wellbeing for young carers (P1)</p> <p>So we using it to do what these learners want and um which is doing some fun things (P1)</p> | <p>Flow, values and joy – "lets do what they want"</p> | |

So it was a very small group. I think it was 11 young carers and they, they could invite two members of their family then. So they had an afternoon tea in the park and you know, it was just a nice little celebration (P4)

we've, we sort of put on other different activities, like we've got, um, set activities now. So like cooking programs, DJ activities, um, loads of lovely things for them to do when they, when they come along (P3)

We have also, um done, we did a big garden project on one of um areas in (location) where um, it was a project run by young carers and their families. They were able to come along. Um, and it was almost like six or seven weeks I think that they came in, they were like cleaning up the garden, painting the fences, nailing, like the things back in, planting flowers and their families were able to come along and obviously staff then provide transport to the families that maybe need it. But it was really nice (P3)

Did the big garden project and there was some funding and we worked alongside another uh um I can't quite think um it was a representative within (local authority), for the garden and our families would come along and young kids would come along with their families and they and we completely redid this garden. So, there was like painting the fences and planting we put on like some coffees and cakes and stuff as well. But it was just sort of a nice outdoor activity as well given with COVID and stuff that they were able to meet up weekly and building up those relationships with others um and the parents were able to sort of our chat and stuff as well and the carers. Um that sort of uh, that worked really, really well and we did win an award, so we've been funded another amount of money now within (service) so we're gonna be doing another big garden project, which is again for young carers to sort of run with their families and hoping to have like a green house and stuff and growing vegetables and stuff and just really, really positive (P3)

So last year we was able to bag some funding and we've got the group together which was 11 young carers and they decided they want to do an afternoon tea for their families. So they designed it all, they made invites, you know, they sort it out. They designed the menus and everything. So it was a big project to them um and then they were able to invite two members of their family to join them for an afternoon tea. So it some of the teachers went up, you know, so we got like a nice community feel to it. But it was just the positivity of the of the afternoon uh, which is fantastic you know, 'cause, they done it all themselves, but they were getting their treats as well (P4)

Different things in the community as well. So I asked them right, what do you want for easter as a treat now and everything. So I said now, do you want to do these zipwires and they say no. I'm afraid of heights. Well, one group were doing the zip wire because they've challenged each other and the other I said like do something over Easter because it's a long time to be off for two weeks without the support from the college. So I said right what you want to do (p1)

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| <p>They'll meet new learners, they're part of the learners ambassadors and they're on the frontline so they can do it in transition, now they'll be saying, like, I'm a young carer, right and this is how the college help me, um don't be afraid, you know, to share information (P1)</p> <p>I know we got different age group but they welcome 'cause somebody else has just joined now our young carers and they're like, yeah, OK, where are they? Let's meet them (P1)</p> <p>Also then that allows them opportunities to speak to others who will go through similar things (P3)</p> <p>You know, all the parents and families were, were on board with it and lots of the staff went up then to support. So it was a nice like community thing (P4)</p> <p>We sort of run youth clubs and we weekly, um, and the children come along. Um, and that's their chance, I suppose, just to sort of have a chat and we can say how things going, how's mam, and that's their time then to be able to talk about it, but then sometimes that's their time to not have to talk about that as well (P3)</p> <p>Sort of groups with young, the young carers, youth club groups and stuff, they building up those friendships, they, and they have built that. It's really lovely to see that they, they be in, when they come in and they, they see their friends that they've made and they can just sit and chill and that's when they can together talk about they've had a really, really rubbish week or they've had a really positive week or this might be worrying them (P3)</p> <p>So that know that they're not on their own. There's lots of other um young people who are in similar situations, and they have the chance then weekly at the settings and in the youth clubs to be able to discuss those experiences and help each other out (P3)</p> <p>They build friendships with others and they get it to share their own experiences, have down time (P3)</p> <p>I think it's peer support as well of yeah, other young people understanding the role and the impact that it can have and peers being supportive of that and having a really good awareness and understanding of the young carers role 'cause, it's not just, it varies, doesn't it (P3)</p> | <p>Shared understanding</p> <p>Friendship and belonging</p> | |
| <p>From a college point of view we've got um young carers and they've got their own Teams group. So this week they they've been to see (***), so they posting stuff about photos of them being in TJI Fridays uh but they do that with the local authority so we work hand in hand and then the local authority representative will come in and we've got a carers group (P2)</p> <p>So they quite uh I like it because they really are vocal and they're on then learner voice which they meet termly across the college, so they are quite active in saying right, this is what we want (P1)</p> | <p>Togetherness and group voice</p> | |

Our pupil views are heard continuously because they've all got access to at the pupil voice meetings and everything so they can voice things there (P1)

Uh the young carers do like to work as a group as well (P2)

We are just in the process of starting up our groups up again though 'cause they do like a little group meet on a lunch time as well.

Young people do like they work as a team and you know, I mean welcome people in (P1)

So it was a very small group. I think it was 11 young carers and they, they could invite two members of their family then. So they

had an afternoon tea in the park and you know, it was just a nice little celebration (P4)

You know, all the parents and families were, were on board with it and lots of the staff went up then to support. So it was a nice like community thing (P4)

Really nice for them to come out and do those activities together and again, that allows that conversation, I suppose, to naturally when they're busy doing other things to sort of speak about what they're feeling and what perhaps they, what they like, what they don't like, what they'd like to sort of see more of (P3)

Did the the big garden project and there was some funding and we worked alongside another uh um I can't quite think um it was a representative within (local authority), for the garden and our families would come along and young kids would come along with their families and they and we completely redid this garden. So, there was like painting the fences and planting we put on like some coffees and cakes and stuff as well. But it was just sort of a nice outdoor activity as well given with COVID and stuff that they were able to meet up weekly and building up those relationships with others um and the parents were able to sort of our chat and stuff as well and the carers. Um that sort of uh, that worked really, really well and we did win an award, so we've been funded another amount of money now within (service) so we're gonna be doing another big garden project, which is again for young carers to sort of run with their families and hoping to have like a green house and stuff and growing vegetables and stuff and just really, really positive (P3)

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They love being here it back with a group that that's their voice that's their power together (P1)

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| <p>You know and I think then, you know, you try your best to reassure them that you know it it's OK (P2)</p> <p>There's support out then you're not going to get into any trouble (P2)</p> <p>They'll meet new learners, they're part of the learners ambassadors and they're on the frontline so they can do it in transition, now they'll be saying, like, I'm a young carer, right and this is how the college help me, um don't be afraid, you know, to share information (P1)</p> <p>Most of the time I go and find them to just have, you know, everything okay. Just a little smile, you know, just to let 'em know where we are, if they need us through the day (P4)</p> <p>So the badges was a no, but they know they have the support (P4)</p> <p>Relationship with staff to where everyone is on board and looking out for that child (P4)</p> <p>Um, we were lucky last summer we managed to, um, bag some funding from somewhere and we put on an event in (location) for the young carers and their families (P4)</p> <p>We sort of run youth clubs and we weekly, um, and the children come along. Um, and that's their chance, I suppose, just to sort of have a chat and we can say how things going, how's mam, and that's their time then to be able to talk about it, but then sometimes that's their time to not have to talk about that as well (p3)</p> <p>So it was a very small group. I think it was 11 young carers and they, they could invite two members of their family then. So they had an afternoon tea in the park and you know, it was just a nice little celebration to say, look, you know, we know, we know what you're doing is brilliant. And this is just like a little thank you for just doing what you're doing (P4)</p> <p>You know, all the parents and families were, were on board with it and lots of the staff went up then to support. So it was a nice like community thing (P4)</p> <p>We have also, um, done, we did a big garden project on one of our um areas in (location) where, um, it was a project run by young carers and their families. They were able to come along. Um, and it was like almost like six or seven weeks I think that they, they came in, they were like cleaning up the garden, painting the fences, nailing, like the things back in, planting flowers and their families were able to come along and obviously staff then provide transport to the families that maybe needed it. But it was really nice (P3)</p> <p>Really nice for them to come out and, do those activities together. And again, that, that allows that conversation, I suppose, to naturally when they're busy doing things to, to sort of speak about they're feeling and, and what perhaps they, what they like, what they don't like, what they'd like to</p> | <p>Reaching out, and welcoming in</p> <p>Creating a safe base.</p> | <p>Voice does not occur in a vacuum – A community around the family</p> <p>Representation in action –</p> <p>Informed and included</p> |
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| <p>sort of see more of, um, cuz we are actually doing another garden project now we've won the funding with it within (name of workplace) and we're gonna be doing another big gardening project again with the young carers (P3)</p> <p>if we can see that and identify that they're looking like a little bit upset or we've actually spoken to the parent or, and there really is concerns, we can then go out and do some direct work then like ELSA, um, or just generally go out and doing a couple of sessions with them and sort of, and unpicking what it is that's happening, re-reassuring them and things, depending on what it is that's bothering them I suppose (P3)</p> <p>um I suppose for us in the school, it was organizing the event in the park, you know, so it was, they had a focus, you know, and they could involve their family in it and it was all done by themselves. So they had the group together, they knew who the other carers were, you know, and they could all work together wanting it to be, you know a massive thing and, and, and a positive thing for everyone and their families (P4)</p> <p>I think some sort of uh parents and carers having that understanding that that you know needing help from your child is actually OK, you know, you're not going to get in trouble with children services and you know, there is dedicated help out there and I think that way more children will sort of come through as well. 'cause as I said without the permission of parents and carers, we're unable to work with the children and I think there is a lot of stigma around it and the fact that they feel they're going to get into a lot of trouble because of it (P2)</p> <p>Yeah it's reassurance for them isn't it you know for them to know yeah I recognise and I know that I can go somewhere if I need to. I can just explain. This is my role. This is what I do (P3)</p> <p>With us in the school, we've got a very good, um, report, home school link, you know, so the parents are aware and so the child doesn't gotta go home and worry that they've said something wrong, so it's quite open. Um, so we find that that relaxes them more and then they're able to come into the, the, uh, wellbeing room and they able to talk alot more openly. So they don't feel they're gonna get in trouble, you know? (P4)</p> | | |
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| <p>I think it might be different for you because of the age range, but we've gotta have parental consent and I think sometimes (P2)</p> | <p>Permission and confidentiality</p> | |

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| <p>Parents are very worried that they're going to get into trouble (P2)</p> <p>so quite often, like our children will say, yeah, I'm a young carer, right and I do this, this and this and then you ring home and parents will saying no, no, they don't do any of that (P1)</p> <p>With the comp obviously they didn't wanna highlight themselves. So the badges was a no (p4)</p> <p>If we can see that and identify that they're looking like a little bit upset or we've actually spoken to the parent or, and there really is concerns, we can then go out and do some direct work then like ELSA, um, or just generally go out and doing a couple of sessions with them and sort of, and unpicking what it is that's happening, re-reassuring them and things, depending on what it is that's bothering them I suppose (P3)</p> <p>They had grown up in that role and it was what they've always known. Umm so I just sort of said, oh, like there will be a young carers ID badge, we provide different opportunities such as youth clubs and stuff. You can get to speak to others and they don't sort of go out much either to be honest. Um so they were sort of accepting of it and we went through the assessment and they now got the young carers badges and which they happy with and they have also started to attend the youth clubs that we've got on and made some really lovely friendships with others um ... and they wanna come along and they want to go on the trips that we're providing and different things (p3)</p> <p>Early identification um really, you know, support in place straight away...</p> <p>Financial help. Uhm, it is such a burden on family and everything we get like the person being cared for might call us and be in tears feeling so guilty um whereas we could support the young carers but sometimes the family, then are feeling so traumatised by putting the young person through this. Right and so early identification is massive to us (P1)</p> <p>I think some sort of uh parents and carers having that understanding that that you know needing help from your child is actually OK, you know, you're not going to get in trouble with children services. And you know, there is dedicated help out there and I think that way more children will sort of come through as well. 'cause as I said without the permission of parents and carers, we're unable to work with the children and I think there is a lot of stigma around it and the fact that they feel they're going to get into a lot of trouble because of it (P2)</p> | | |
| <p>We want a carers card so that people know who we are. Not everybody wants that because they want the privacy of it (P2)</p> <p>There are some who don't want to be identified at all (P2)</p> <p>They just don't want to be treated any differently, they want to be the same as everybody else (P2)</p> | <p>Privacy and openness</p> | |

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| <p>Then there are those then and they're happy for staff to be made aware. So sort of different ways with dealing with, you know, sort of the different young carers, you know, if it's one that doesn't want to be identified, it'll just be the case then we use an internal school robin system, so it will just alert staff to the fact that they are young carers just to keep that extra eye on them but obviously not to highlight anything or treat them (P2)</p> <p>Uh you know even though some of them don't want to be identified (P2)</p> <p>We regularly check-in sessions with them. So, you know, they tend to just get on with their day, if you know what I mean, they don't, you know, highlight anything (P4)</p> <p>So the badges was a no, but they know they have the support of the wellbeing room (P4)</p> <p>I liked (participant 1) where you said that when the first thing they see when they walk into their college is the banner that sort of says about young carers and I think that's a nice, discrete way if they want it 'cause some are very, quite open about it and some don't tend to want to talk about that (P3)</p> <p>Um I think knowing that, that a young person and, and whether or not they want to be able to, to, to share their, their own views and stuff, rather than sort of being forceful with it and, and putting them on the spot. It's just knowing that they're comfortable in, in those situations to be able to share that's helpful (P3)</p> | | |
| <p>To sort of share their views and what they want, they don't want (P2)</p> <p>So you know and next week now, will be learner led because they'll be encouraging young carers (P1)</p> <p>Yeah for us we've just renewed our bronze (LA) schools award, so we had the questionnaires and so obviously all of our young carers filled them and so we've taken sort of you know things from them on how we can improve (P2)</p> <p>With the comp obviously they didn't want to highlight themselves. So the badges was a no (p4)</p> <p>I think they do young carers events as well globally on the (.) with young carers festivals and stuff, which provide that platform, I think for the young carers to voice, uh, their feelings and opinions on things and, and they're wants on perhaps could be done differently, and I think that's just growing and growing every year now, isn't it? (P3)</p> | <p>Choice, autonomy and control</p> | |

We sort of run youth clubs and we weekly, um, and the children come along. Um, and that's their chance, I suppose, just to sort of have a chat and we can say how things going, how's mam, and that's their time then to be able to talk about it, but then sometimes that's their time to not have to talk about that as well (p3)

What are they enjoying from the service, what else could they have (P3)

um I suppose for us in the school, it was organizing the event in the park, you know, so it was, they had a focus, you know, and they could involve their family in it and it was all done by themselves. So they had the group together, they knew who the other carers were, you know, and they could all work together wanting it to be, you know a massive thing and, and, and a positive thing for everyone and their families (p4)

But we also do young carers forums now and again, so that that provides them the opportunity to uh to sort of have their say and allow them to share what they would really like from the support within our service and for young carers that we can put in place or maybe reach out to other organizations to sort of implement that additional support that they might want or need (P3)

That's really lovely and they really love it and it's what they want. So when we do our like forums with them and ask and we sort of see what is that they want and then if we can do it here, we'll definitely do our best (P3)

like they have free laptops and everything, everything to, to make their life easier and so that they can maintain their education, which is an important part. So we really flexible again and just because they've told us what they want. They want to be able to come in late or, you know, they could just grab breakfast or, you know, whatever, but it's all about them and we work around them. Really so that they can, you know, and their education (P1)

The only um I sometimes find (participant 3) when they come to college, they want to be on the health and social care course and they go, oh, why? Because I'm a carer (P1)

So I asked them right, what do you want for easter as a treat now and everything. So I said now, do you want to do these zipwires and they say no. I'm afraid of heights. Well, one group were doing the zip wire because they've challenged each other and the other I said like do something over Easter because it's a long time to be off for two weeks without the support from the college. So I said right what you want to do (P1)

I liked (participant 1) where you said that when the first thing they see when they walk into their college is the banner that sort of says about young carers and I think that's a nice, discrete way if they want it 'cause some are very, quite open about it and some don't tend to wanna talk about that (P1)

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| <p>Um I think knowing that, that a young person and, and whether or not they want to be able to, to, to share their, their own views and stuff, rather than sort of being forceful with it and, and putting them on the spot. It's just knowing that they're comfortable in, in those situations to be able to share that's helpful (P3)</p> | | |
| <p>I think the perception is that, you know, if the children are doing things at home to help out, then, you know, children services are going to be involved and it opens up (P2)</p> <p>The whole can of worms, so for some of our children, you know, we don't get that consent to work with them either (P2)</p> <p>I mean you know we've opened up cans of worms ourselves because sometimes you have a learner that only comes to us as a young carer because they've been down disciplinary because for their absence or attendance in something and then we are picking them up or they break in tears and then when you're unravelling, they say (P1).</p> <p>Then because the child that is under 18 you see well I'm going in safeguarding so sometimes you're helping and then are you creating a really big issue for that child and so is it can be tough and you will see that (P1).</p> <p>Air any concerns and then obviously we pass them on then to the pastoral manager or the learning coordinators just to let it keep everyone in the loop to, you know, why they're having a bad day (P4)</p> <p>I mean I was in contact a lot by teams, but then the number of referrals I had to make to the crisis team because they were feeling actively suicidal, rose dramatically. So there was a few, few. I think 'cause we working from home, so you're trying to do your best to get hold of a GP or the crisis team (P1)</p> | <p>With sharing and listening comes responsibility</p> <p>Opening a can of worms</p> | |
| <p>But others like their tutor might say well, why are you late? You know why you? Why you got your phone on you? Because you've got college rules. But then they got to be made flexible for young carer who needs access to their phone. As you say, (participant 2) they might need them to check in on them and things like that (P1)</p> <p>Most of the time I go and find them to just have, you know, everything okay. Just a little smile, you know, just to let 'em know where we are, if they need us through the day (P4)</p> <p>So if they're just having a bit of a bad day or they're late, you know, we provide uniform. If they need uniform, you know, if they've forgotten anything, then we've got things on hand or them to use without worrying about it (P4)</p> <p>I think for staff now being aware and those young carers ID badges, um, going to help with like homework and things, or knowing they're just distracted today, but there is that reason why they're distracted. They could be worried, they could be upset, they could have had a dreadful morning (P3)</p> | <p>A balance between being discrete and hearing what CYP need</p> | |

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| <p>We have a great pastor and manager who was always letting the staff know if there's any issues throughout the day with any children. Um, so all staff are aware of, you know, possible, you know, meltdowns or just needing time out (P4)</p> <p>Air any concerns and then obviously we pass them on then to the pastoral manager or the learning coordinators just to let it keep everyone in the loop to, you know, know why they're having a bad day (P4)</p> | | |
| <p>Like a transition because not often information is shared between schools and colleges and that's the biggest gap cause whereas someone like (participant 2) might just supported them admirably in in college um schools, we don't get that hand over and they then their left to their own devices and then they might drop out (P1)</p> <p>But they do that with the local authority so we work hand in hand and then the local authority representative will come in and we've got a carers group (P2)</p> <p>They'll meet new learners, they're part of the learners ambassadors and they're on the frontline so they can do it in transition, now they'll be saying, like, I'm a young carer, right and this is how the college help me, um don't be afraid, you know, to share information (P1)</p> <p>Just in the process of starting up our groups up again though 'cause they do like a little group meet on a lunch time as well (P2)</p> <p>We're off here and the local authority have booked them into a spa and then off down to the (name of place) (P1)</p> <p>We've done the schools award that we've just done the (qualification) carers federations, we've just achieved that, but all of that goes on our website detail. You know you you've gotta highlight things (P1)</p> <p>So it was a very small group. I think it was 11 young carers and they, they could invite two members of their family then. So they had an afternoon tea in the park and you know, it was just a nice little celebration to say, look, you know, we know, we know what you're doing is brilliant.</p> <p>We have also, um, um, done, we did a big garden project on one of our um areas in (location) where, um, it was a project run by young carers and their families. They were able to come along. Um, and it was like almost like six or seven weeks I think that they, they came in, they were like cleaning up the garden, painting the fences, nailing, like the things back in, planting flowers and their families were able to come along and obviously staff then provide transport to the families that maybe needed it. But it was really nice (P3)</p> | <p>Sharing practice and working together</p> | <p>"You're doing it already" - Co-construction, collaboration and enabling dialogue.</p> <p>Co-constructing and platforms to enable dialogue</p> |

Really nice for them to come out and do those activities together and again, that allows that conversation, I suppose, to naturally when they're busy doing other things to sort of speak about what they're feeling and what perhaps they, what they like, what they don't like, what they'd like to sort of see more of (P3)

The big garden project and there was some funding and we worked alongside another uh um I can't quite think um it was a representative within (local authority), for the garden and our families would come along and young kids would come along with their families and they and we completely redid this garden. So, there was like painting the fences and planting we put on like some coffees and cakes and stuff as well. But it was just sort of a nice outdoor activity as well given with COVID and stuff that they were able to meet up weekly and building up those relationships with others um and the parents were able to sort of our chat and stuff as well and the carers. Um that sort of uh, that worked really, really well and we did win an award, so we've been funded another amount of money now within (service) so we're gonna be doing another big garden project, which is again for young carers to sort of run with their families and hoping to have like a green house and stuff and growing vegetables and stuff and just really, really positive (P3)

So last year we was able to bag some funding and we've got the group together which was 11 young carers and they decided they want to do an afternoon tea for their families. So they designed it all, they made invites, you know, they sort it out. They designed the menus and everything. So it was a big project to them um and then they were able to invite two members of their family to join them for an afternoon tea. So it some of the teachers went up, you know, So we got like a nice community feel to it. But it was just the positivity of the of the afternoon uh, which is fantastic you know, 'cause, they done it all themselves, but they were getting their treats as well. (P4)

Um and then we are looking forward to their future where young carers um are they going to go to university or what employment do they have because not all companies have the carers policy in place, you know flexible working or things like that so we're trying to look at it in the future where they go not just finished college and that's it, back home and caring and so again they there is so much you can do with young carers but together that they um empower each other (P1)

I think some sort of uh parents and carers having that understanding that that you know needing help from your child is actually OK, you know, you're not going to get in trouble with children services. And you know, there is dedicated help out there and I think that way more children will sort of come through as well. 'cause as I said without the permission of parents and carers, we're unable to work with the children and I think there is a lot of stigma around it and the fact that they feel they're going to get into a lot of trouble because of it (P2)

Do you know there is lots of good practice, just being shown by here today (P1)

I think it's a seeing that they enjoy coming along to our groups. Um, they, they will say the things that they want and, and more often than not, that's what we'll sort of provide for them. Or if there is a problem, we'll do our best to sort of resolve that, um, by

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| <p>doing something ourselves or speaking with the, the family or speaking to an outside agency, maybe that could also offer support.</p> <p>So they know that, or they, they, what they want and what they need. Um, people are, are around them, supporting them as best that they can to meet their needs (P3)</p> | | |
| <p>So obviously I'm the young carer champion here in school (P2)</p> <p>I'm very passionate about them because they are saving the government billions. You know and all because obviously they love their, their parents or whatever the relatives are (P1)</p> <p>I'm like, welfare and wellbeing champion (P1)</p> <p>Listening to them, we do sometimes provide feedback purposes and do like forums, which gives them a sort of opportunities to, to say, well, what things they would like from our service then what activities they would like, what types of respite care they'd like, um, and activities that we can provide (P3)</p> <p>Going to help with like homework and things, or knowing they're just distracted today, but there is that reason why they're distracted. They could be worried, they could be upset, they could have had a dreadful morning. (P3)</p> <p>I think it's uh schools having that understanding because one of my other young carers was really struggling with in school to oh uh struggling with homework at home to complete that homework and school and have now allowed them to do it within a quiet break time or a little bit at the end of lunch so that she hasn't got our worry if I can't complete my homework. But she knows that school are aware, or she's able to complete it in school and if she needs to. And I think it's little things like that and that make that massive difference for them (P3)</p> <p>Um and then we are looking forward to their future where young carers um are they going to go to university or what employment do they have because not all companies have the carers policy in place, you know flexible working or things like that so we're trying to look at it in the future where they go not just finished college and that's it, back home and caring and so again they there is so much you can do (P1)</p> <p>So for them to know about um and able to identify for them to know and have those aspirations to wanna go to college and want to go onto university (P3)</p> | <p>Young Carer champion. An advocate, a defender, "battling for rights".</p> | |
| <p>They might need to use the telephone to ring home several times a day to check in (P2)</p> | <p>Celebrating and working with what works</p> | |

So they will say, right, OK. The price in the canteen is extortionate, we are missing meals and so we will say OK, then so what if we give you a free breakfast and free lunch? Right, so they have a voice and they tell us what works, what doesn't (P1)

We've got a dedicated school policy, just for our young carers so, you know, that allows them to use their phone for regular check ins and you know we've got just generic support them, which all the young carers obviously you know are entitled to (P2)

Our pupil views are heard continuously because they've all got access to at the pupil voice meetings and everything so they can voice things there (P1)

They very much enjoy what they do. The majority of them are really proud and they really, they like, they like to do the role, um, which is really good (P3)

So it was a very small group. I think it was 11 young carers and they, they could invite two members of their family then. So they had an afternoon tea in the park and you know, it was just a nice little celebration to say, look, you know, we know, we know what you're doing is brilliant. And this is just like a little thank you for just doing what you're doing (P4)

Maybe something's gone good, you know, so we can celebrate that. So, you know, it's a bit of both really (P4)

We have also, um, um, done, we did a big garden project on one of our um areas in (location) where, um, it was a project run by young carers and their families. They were able to come along. Um, and it was like almost like six or seven weeks I think that they, they came in, they were like cleaning up the garden, painting the fences, nailing, like the things back in, planting flowers and their families were able to come along and obviously staff then provide transport to the families that maybe needed it. But it was really nice (P3)

The big garden project and there was some funding and we worked alongside another uh um I can't quite think um it was a representative within (local authority), for the garden and our families would come along and young kids would come along with their families and they and we completely redid this garden. So, there was like painting the fences and planting we put on like some coffees and cakes and stuff as well. But it was just sort of a nice outdoor activity as well given with COVID and stuff that they were able to meet up weekly and building up those relationships with others um and the parents were able to sort of our chat and stuff as well and the carers. Um that sort of uh, that worked really, really well and we did win an award, so we've been funded another amount of money now within (service) so we're gonna be doing another big garden project, which is again for young carers to sort of run with their families and hoping to have like a green house and stuff and growing vegetables and stuff and just really, really positive (P3)

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| <p>I think (participants) school are doing it already, is having that, um, welcoming environment and, and staff who are approachable, that they can sort of speak to staff that they know who've got that good understanding of, of the, the young carer and, and the role and what it could entail and what, what impact it could have on their daily life (P3)</p> | | |
| <p>Like our pupil views are heard continuously because they've all got access to at the pupil voice meetings and everything so they can voice things there (P1)</p> <p>To come and have fun because like I say, we got live bands and everything, but they're promoting it so they love that (P1)</p> <p>Listening to them, we do sometimes provide feedback purposes and do like forums, which gives them a sort of opportunities to, to say, well, what things they would like from our service then what activities they would like, what types of respite care they'd like, um, and activities that we can provide (P3)</p> <p>um I suppose for us in the school, it was organizing the event in the park, you know, so it was, they had a focus, you know, and they could involve their family in it and it was all done by themselves. So they had the group together, they knew who the other carers were, you know, and they could all work together wanting it to be, you know a massive thing and a positive thing for everyone and their families (P4)</p> <p>That's lovely and they really love it and it's what they want. So when we do our like forums with them and ask and we sort of see what is that they want and then if we can do it here, we'll definitely do our best (P3)</p> | <p>Opportunities to lead, plan and action</p> | |
| <p>But then that's only came about because the Welsh Government money and you know (P1)</p> <p>Um, we were lucky last summer we managed to, um, bag some funding from somewhere and we put on an event in (location) for the young carers and their families (P4)</p> <p>So last year we was able to bag some funding and we've got the group together which was 11 young carers and they decided they want to do an afternoon tea for their families. So they designed it all, they made invites, you know, they sort it out. They designed the menus and everything. So it was a big project to them um and then they were able to invite two members of their family to join them for an afternoon tea. So it some of the teachers went up, you know, So we got like a nice community feel to it. But it was just the positivity of the of the afternoon uh, which is fantastic you know, 'cause, they done it all themselves, but they were getting their treats as well (P4)</p> <p>So they have money for food (P1)</p> | <p>Funding to support ability to change</p> | |

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| <p>So there's always lots of events going on. Um, but we go out and support them and listen to them (P3)</p> <p>I think it's just sort of checking in with them then (P3)</p> <p>We regularly check-in sessions with them. So, you know, they tend to just get on with their day, if you know what I mean, they don't, you know, highlight anything (P4)</p> <p>Most of the time I go and find them to just have, you know, everything okay. Just a little smile, you know, just to let 'em know where we are, if they need us through the day (P4)</p> <p>So if they're just having a bit of a bad day or they're late, you know, we provide uniform. If they need uniform, you know, if they've forgotten anything, then we've got things on hand or them to use without worrying about it (P4)</p> <p>Really nice for them to come out and do those activities together and again, that allows that conversation, I suppose, to naturally when they're busy doing other things to sort of speak about what they're feeling and what perhaps they, what they like, what they don't like, what they'd like to sort of see more of</p> <p>yeah to do those that time normal things that they might not be able to do on their own isn't it (P4)</p> <p>You know, just, you know, being out together and, you know (p3)</p> <p>I find just, just generally chatting and, and talking, um, is better, um, with them directly openly honestly (P3)</p> | <p>Incidental opportunities to hear voices - being there</p> | |
| <p>I think they do young carers events as well globally on the (.) with young carers festivals and stuff, which provide that platform, I think for the young carers to voice, uh, their feelings and opinions on things and, and they're wants on perhaps could be done differently, and I think that's just growing and growing every year now, isn't it? (P3)</p> <p>Um, we were lucky last summer we managed to, um, bag some funding from somewhere and we put on an event in (location) for the young carers and their families (P4)</p> <p>So it was a very small group. I think it was 11 young carers and they, they could invite two members of their family then. So they had an afternoon tea in the park and you know, it was just a nice little celebration to say, look, you know, we know, we know what you're doing is brilliant. And this is just like a little thank you for just doing what you're doing (p4)</p> <p>We have also, um, done, we did a big garden project on one of our um areas in (location) where , um, it was a project run by young carers and their families. They were able to come along. Um, and it was like almost like six or seven weeks I think that they, they came in, they were like cleaning up the</p> | <p>Forums, events and initiatives</p> | |

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| <p>garden, painting the fences, nailing, like the things back in, planting flowers and their families were able to come along and obviously staff then provide transport to the families that maybe needed it. But it was really nice (P3)</p> <p>um I suppose for us in the school, it was organizing the event in the park, you know, so it was, they had a focus, you know, and they could involve their family in it and it was all done by themselves. So they had the group together, they knew who the other carers were, you know, and they could all work together wanting it to be, you know a massive thing and, and, and a positive thing for everyone and their families (P4)</p> <p>But we also do young carers forums now and again, so that that provides them the opportunity to uh to sort of have their say and allow them to share what they would really like from the support within our service and for young carers that we can put in place or maybe reach out to other organizations to sort of implement that additional support that they might want or need (P3)</p> <p>So last year we was able to bag some funding and we've got the group together which was 11 young carers and they decided they want to do an afternoon tea for their families. So they designed it all, they made invites, you know, they sort it out. They designed the menus and everything. So it was a big project to them um and then they were able to invite two members of their family to join them for an afternoon tea. So it some of the teachers went up, you know, So we got like a nice community feel to it. But it was just the positivity of the of the afternoon uh, which is fantastic you know, 'cause, they done it all themselves, but they were getting their treats as well. (P4)</p> | | |
| <p>But then we will use, um, like assessment with them, just basic ones like what they, like, what are they enjoying from the service, what else could they have (P3)</p> <p>Were absolutely young carers, um, and I went to complete the, the assessment that we do within (name of service)</p> <p>anyway, cuz it was to identify all the needs, uh, within the family. But when sort of discussing that there's a young carers assessment and can be done with the, the, the children to know that they've identified as young carers, but they were both quite reluctant to do it.</p> <p>Cause they didn't want to be labelled as young carers or identified because it was just like they have grown up in that role (P3)</p> | <p>Assessment of need</p> | |

Stage 4: Developing and reviewing themes

This stage allowed me to actively explore developing themes, considering the nature of the theme, the boundaries and whether there was sufficient data to support the development of the theme (Braun and Clarke, 2020). I checked whether each theme was distinct from another. Themes which did not include “thick” and rich information were either removed or collapsed into another theme as depicted in Table 18. The data set was reviewed again and I considered whether themes bared relevance to the overall research questions.

Table 18

Example of developing and reviewing themes

| Voice does not occur in a vacuum – A community around the family | Social constructions, representations, and identity. | Who and the tool | “You’re doing it already” - Co-construction, collaboration and enabling dialogue. |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening a can of worms – Permission, gatekeepers, and confidentiality • Creating a safe base. Offering reassurance and safety. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choice, autonomy, and control. Having agency and being consulted • Representatio n in action – “meeting people where they’re at”. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hidden army. • Being culturally and community sensitive and specific. • Understanding , friendship and belonging – togetherness • Covid-19 – changes to practice, boundaries shifting and changing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational factors, trust, and connection • Transparenc y and doing what you say you’re going to do • Open doors and safe spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating and working with what works. • Platforms, communication , and funding to support ability to change. • Young Carer champion. An advocate, a defender, “battling for rights”. |

Stage 5: Refining, defining, and naming themes

Themes were named to capture the essence of the data and to signal a focus to tell an overall story. There was a stage during the write up where I needed to return to earlier stages as it was felt that themes required further refining. Figure 9 below illustrates my first thematic map. However, themes were further refined and defined until three themes and 9 subthemes were developed. Figure 10 depicts the final thematic map.

Figure 9

Initial Thematic Map

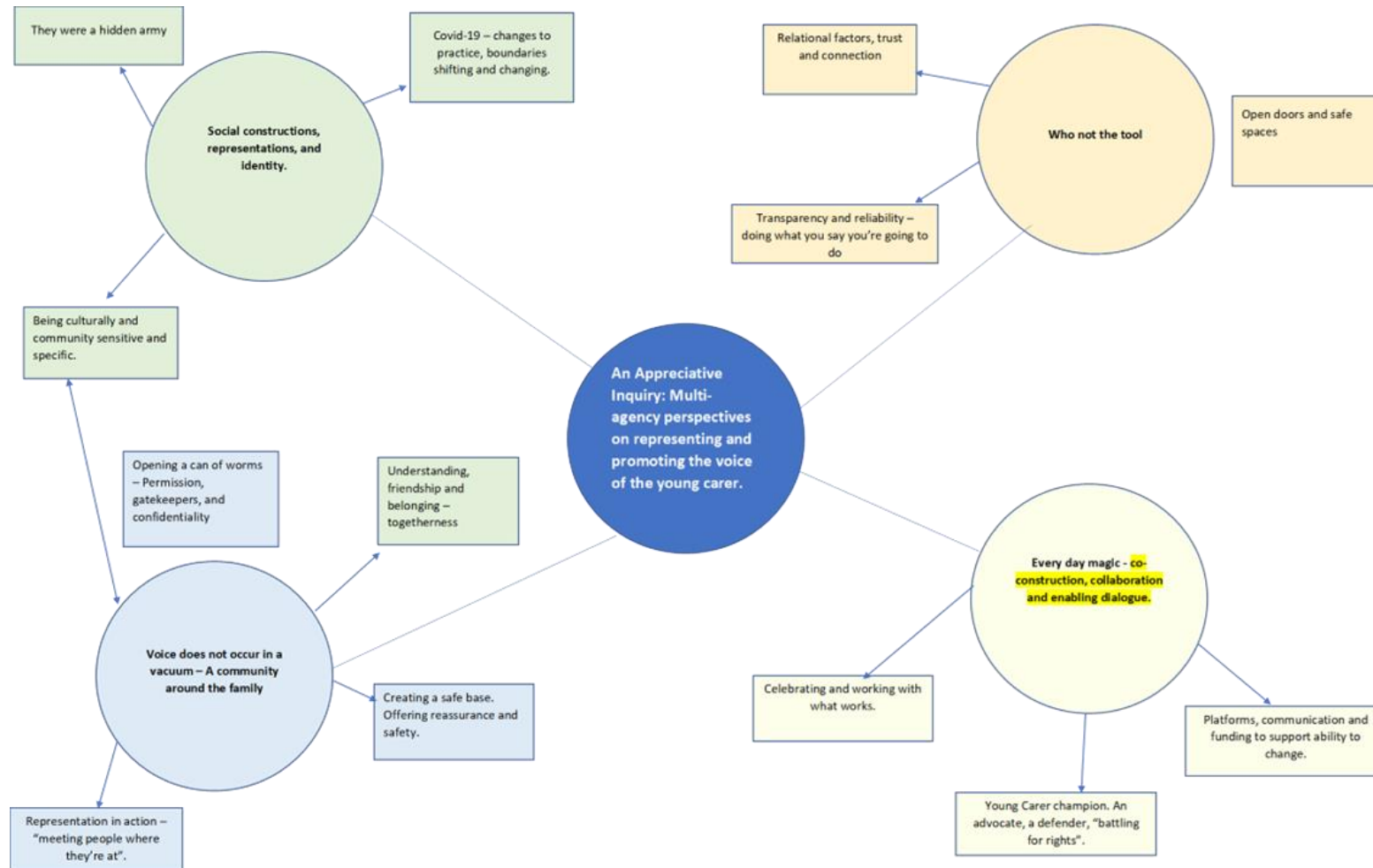
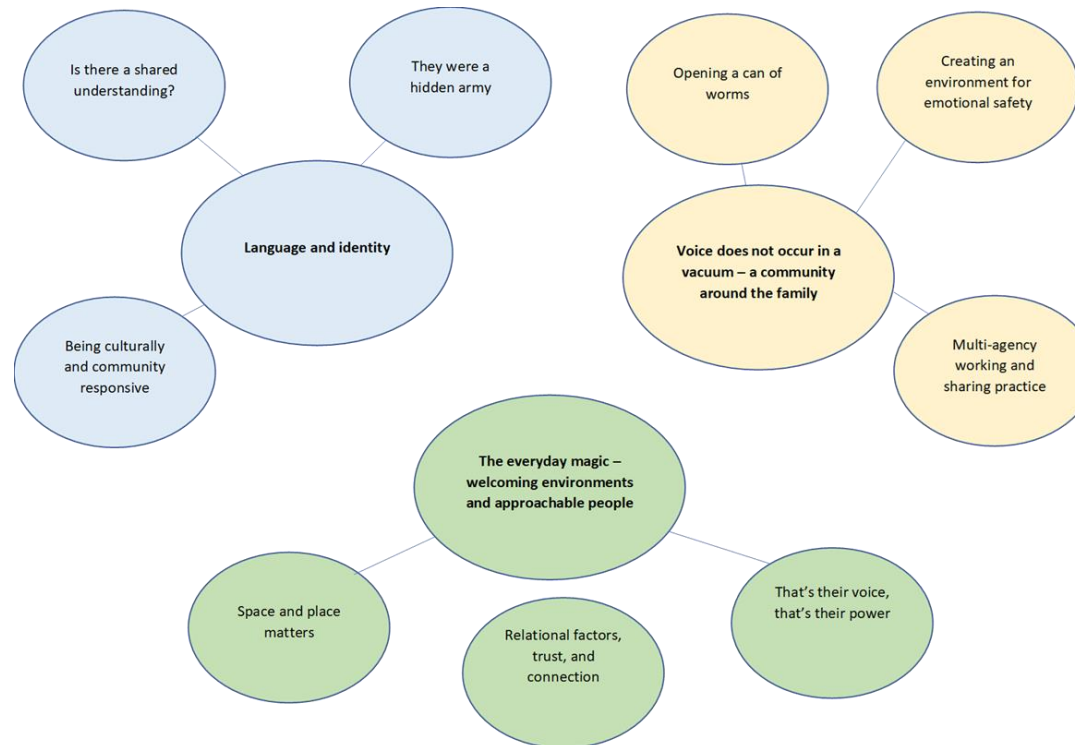


Figure 10

Final Thematic Map



Stage 6: Writing up

The final stage involved presenting the themes using extracts from the data and analytic commentary. It was important to ensure that all participants who took part in the focus group had their voices represented and quotes from each participant were chosen and presented in the research findings.

Important to note that analysis was a recursive process and although I have written about each stage in turn, practice included moving back and forth.

