Article:
Edwards, D. orcid.org/0000-0002-1028-6239 and Canning, R. (2024) 'Is this a joke?' Exploring how care experienced people feel their way through inheritance and what their emotions 'do'. Emotions and Society, 6 (3). pp. 329-348. ISSN: 2631-6897

https://doi.org/10.1332/26316897y2024d000000025

"Is this a joke?": Exploring how Care Experienced people feel their way through inheritance and what their emotions 'do'

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to explore how Care Experienced people 'feel their way through' (Ahmed 2014) inheritance. We do this by triangulating findings from informal empirical research we undertook on social media with our analysis of the broader literature on inheritance contained within blogs, autobiographies and museum exhibitions about Care Experience. Care Experience is a term used to describe people who spent some or all of their childhoods in care, whether that be foster care, children's homes, residential care or kinship care. Care Experienced people are often marginalised and absent from orthodox practices of inheritance and, in fact inheritance can be an 'othering' experience of not fitting into the norm (Edwards and Canning 2023). Inheritance, the act of passing on or receiving something tangible or intangible within families, suggests emotion. The word can provoke mixed emotions and feelings for people who engage in this 'family practice' (Monk 2014, 2016), from grief to happiness. Here, we understand emotion to be 'a lived, believed-in, situated, temporally embodied experience that radiates through a person's stream of consciousness, is felt in and runs through his body, and, in the process of being lived, plunges the person and his associates into a wholly new and transformed reality – the reality of a world that is being constituted by the emotional experience' (Denzin (2009 1984], p. 66). If 'emotions constitute the bodily manifestation of the importance that an event in the natural or social world has for a subject' (Bericat 2016, p. 492), then we argue that the practice of inheritance can be a social and relational event to which people emotionally react and have 'to feel their way through' (Ahmed 2014). In this article we explore what the emotional dimensions of inheritance are for Care Experienced people. A child has the right to 'inherent elements of identity' yet this right is too often overlooked when they are placed in care and children lose their 'kin identity' which is often replaced by a 'collective identity' (Neagu and Sebba (2019). As this paper illustrates, by the time adults with Care Experience 'do' family, they create their own kin identity and inheritance practices.

There are three key sections to this article. In the first part, we explore why inheritance is an emotional *familial* practice and why it may be 'felt' differently by Care Experienced people. In the second part, we briefly outline the approach we took to conducting our research, using social media, literature and blogs and autobiographies about Care Experience to triangulate findings. As participants and activists in the Care Experienced community – Rosie, as a Care Experienced person and Delyth, the daughter of a Care Experienced Mother – we have been able to draw on narratives from our own autobiographies also. In the final section, we outline three key findings from our research. Firstly, we discuss the complex practice of inheritance that has existed for Care Experienced families for centuries. Secondly, we consider how our question immediately sparked negative 'emotional expressions' (Bericat 2016), related to feelings of exclusion, loss and anger of inheritance not being of relevance to them. The "is this a joke?" quote from the article title was an expression from a person who responded to our call. Finally, we argue that whilst marginalised within orthodox inheritance practices, Care Experienced people are 'feeling subjects' (Bericat 2016), who derive new forms and ways of creating or (re)imagining inheritance from the emotions associated with being 'othered' by inheritance practices. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's (2014, p. 4) question: 'What do emotions do?', we show that Care Experienced people 'feel their way through' and 'do' different things with the emotions they attribute to inheritance to forge new inheritances.

2. Inheritance as 'emotional practice'

To most people, inheritance would be understood as 'passing something on' between family members, that could involve the distribution of assets: money, property, titles, important heirlooms, or objects (Edwards and Canning 2023). In many respects, this is correct. Along with such tangible inheritance, 'people might also acknowledge more intangible forms of inheritance, such as genetic and cultural inheritances' (Edwards and Canning 2023, p. 177) or family secrets (Barnwell 2019, Smart 2011). As Barclay and Koefoed (2021, p. 8) suggest, 'Inheritances take multiple forms […] [and] are not static sites of knowledge or knowing but opportunities for exchange and engagement with our ancestors, for renegotiation and reknowing'. Inheritance is bound up with our heritage, our identities, our families, and kinship.

Whilst inheritance may be both tangible and intangible, *family* seems to be at the centre of current understandings of it. In fact, 'inherited objects play a significant role in shaping how families preserve themselves and convey a sense of themselves to future generations' (Barclay and Koefoed 2021, p. 4).

In our chapter *[title]* (Edwards and Canning 2023, p. 177), we drew on the work of Monk (2016) to argue that 'inheritance, broadly understood, has long been the crux and almost the raison d'être of conventional, albeit subtly shifting, familial practices'. Sociologist David Morgan contends that a 'family practice' is a way of understanding families as what people *do* rather than as a static structure. Seeing family as a practice allows us to foreground the mundane routines and habits through which we make sense of and produce and reproduce family as a set of relationships. To be an effective family practice, 'the actions which constitute family practices need to be linked in a sufficiently clear way with the "wider systems of meaning" ... to enable them to be fully understood as such' (Finch 2007, p. 67). Furthermore, 'an important part of the nurturing and development of relationships so that their "family-like" qualities are positively established' is through 'displaying' as well as 'doing' family (Finch 2007, p. 80). This means individuals conveying to each other and for others that their practices and 'actions do constitute "doing family things" thereby' confirming 'that these relationships are "family" relationships' (Finch 2007, p. 67). Inheritance is part of this way of 'doing', 'making' and 'displaying' family. But it is also part of the practice of 'doing', 'making' and 'displaying' the self. It is within 'family settings [that] stories, photographs and memory objects support narratives of identity and belonging' (Hoyle et al 2020, p. 935). It seems inevitable therefore that there are emotional dimensions to the practice of inheritance. Or we could say, inheritance is an emotional practice. If inheritance is an integral dimension to how families are done and displayed and also to one's sense of self and feeling of belonging, what if you are estranged from family? How does inheritance play out then? And what feelings might one have towards it?

3. Our method of knowing and asking

Emotions have been a 'sticking point' for researchers (Ahmed 2014, p. 4) and especially within the field of children's social care. Substantial academic inquiry and research into Care Experience and emotion focuses on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in care (Bazalgette et al 2015 and Juliette et al 2023). This way of understanding emotions through the lens of mental health and wellbeing, in order to develop support and interventions, has meant the psychologising of emotions (White 1993; Ahmed 2014) and we only see Care Experienced people as 'psychologised objects'. Concern predominantly remains focused on the 'interiority' and 'cognitive' (Ahmed 2014) aspects of emotion, with the wider relational and embodied (Denzin, 1990) emotional lives of Care Experienced people being overlooked. However, Care Experienced people 'feel their way through' (Ahmed 2014) their everyday experiences. They live their lives outside of the system of 'care', they live in communities, in families and within networks of feeling. In fact, we know very little about the 'everyday' emotional lives of Care Experienced people and how their emotions of everyday life are shaped by their Care Experience.

Our method of knowing and asking included collecting and analysing data from three sources: academic literature; blogs/ podcasts / autobiographies and exhibitions; and evidence that we gathered via social media which were drawn on and triangulated to inform the discussion that follows.

Our participation in the *Inheriting the Family*[1] workshops were instrumental in our interest in exploring the connection between inheritance, emotion, and Care Experience. We held the hypothesis that Care Experience very much shapes the emotional experiences of inheritance, but we felt we needed more in order to *really* get to the feeling. As Hochschild (2019, p. 11) writes, 'One way to get to feeling is through the story to which it is attached. Deep feelings are linked to a deep story'. With this in mind, we decided to 'get to the feeling' through 'the story', only then could we really understand the ontologies of emotion involved in inheritance for

[1] Inheriting the Family was an AHRC-funded project that explored the role of emotion in explaining why some objects and stories (and not others) are transmitted across generations and from the private sphere of the family to public spaces like museums and archives. The network held several workshops and history harvests. Along with other researchers and practitioners, we participated in Workshop 4: *Storytelling: Intangible Inheritances*, which explored how families transmit intangible inheritances across generations.

Care Experienced people. We got to 'the story' through conducting preliminary background research, by accessing and analysing information and experience already in the public domain, specifically by reading the autobiographies and blogs of Care Experienced people; Lemn Sissay's *My Name is Why* (2019), for example. It is here where we learned and eventually wrote about how Care Experienced people navigate inheritance (Edwards and Canning 2023). But we also did our own empirical research, asking Care Experienced people to tell us about their views on inheritance through social media platforms. We used Twitter (now known as X) and Facebook. This is what we asked:

> Rosie and I are working on a presentation about Care Experience and Inheritance. If you are #cep and happy to share, what does inheritance look like to you? Is it about stories or objects? As the daughter of #cep I got narrative inheritance.
>
> Call for responses Tweet from Delyth

This was an informal call for people to share their initial views, but it was important to include the voices of Care Experienced People in our presentation. We received several responses to both social media sites. There was no time frame for which people could respond to the conversation and people added their comments intermittently. Some of respondents gave permission for us to use their comment in our presentation and we asked them if we could include them in our previous publication (Edwards and Canning 2023), which we did so anonymously. Others asked us not to share their views, and we upheld their right to privacy and confidentiality. Consent has been ongoing and for this article, we contacted our respondents again to ask if we could use their response in this article and all agreed that we could.

Like Barnwell (2019, p. 89), we didn't expect to get detailed accounts of people's feelings towards inheritance from using this approach. We thought that people would simply respond by sharing what inheritance means to them and what types of practice they engage with, if any. People did share this information with us, but some also went further and shared how they felt about inheritance. We thematically analyzed the replies using some of the themes

that had emerged during our research for our presentation (including life story work, identity, family practice, doing and displaying family, imagination, public/private, tangible/intangible inheritance and absence) and we found Ahmed's (2014) work on 'what emotions do' to be an useful framework for structuring our findings.

4. Discussion

We made three key findings from our triangulated research. Firstly, through our background research, we found that inheritance for Care Experienced people can be inextricably linked to public displays. Secondly, though our empirical research we found that the people who responded to our question, characterised their relationship with inheritance in complex and varying ways. We found that with regards to inheritance, there is an 'attribution of significance' about it (Ahmed 2014) that warrants an emotional response. The first emotional response is often exclusion and marginalisation. Inheritance can 'leave a mark' (Bericat 2019) or make a negative 'impression' (Ahmed 2014). However, our third finding suggests that the marks and impressions made by inheritance can sometimes lead to different ways of 'feeling their way through' inheritance. As Ahmed (2014) reminds us, 'It is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that "surfaces or boundaries are made" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 10). We have found that the negative emotions involved in inheritance practice not only 'transmute' (Bericat 2016) within a network of emotions, but also work in transformative ways by 'doing' things for the self, for family, and for others in the wider care and national community. Like in familial inheritance practice, emotions work intergenerationally for Care Experienced people too.

4.1 Inheritance (re)imagined and the ethics of inheritance on display

Inheritance for Care Experienced families has consisted of complex practices and emotional work for centuries. For instance, through our analysis of the Foundling Museum, we found that the *Foundling Token* exhibition on display at the Foundling Museum and the accompanying exhibition book *Threads of Feeling: The London Foundling Hospital's Textile Tokens, 1740-1770* (Styles 2010*)*, reminds us that between 'the 1740s and 1760s, mothers leaving their babies at the Foundling Hospital would also leave a small object as a means of

identification. The hope was that they would one day be able to reclaim their child'[2]. These small objects embody maternal emotion in tangible form, they signify love, sorrow, and hope. This act was a way of 'doing' and 'displaying' family, of sharing love and creating connection between mother and child. This example also demonstrates the very outward public facing display of inheritance and emotion of Care Experienced families. Although deposited with the foundlings, the children did not inherit their objects; instead, they have been curated into a permanent exhibition to display the heritage of the Foundling Hospital for strangers to see. Furthermore, this display invites others to do their own emotional work and to reflect on how *they* feel about the tokens and Care Experience. The tokens illustrate 'how such objects attain emotional power in very specific circumstances' (Dolan and Holloway 2016, p. 154). This divergence between what is private becoming something that is very public is illustrative of the ethical intricacies of inheritance and emotion for Care Experienced families. Care Experienced people have always had to negotiate their private tangible and intangible inheritances 'being held back' from them, when others have publicly known and shared it in professional settings (see Edwards and Canning 2023).

Nevertheless, the Foundling Museum have begun to ask Care Experienced people to engage with the inheritance displayed at the Museum. In a series of recent podcasts, people including an ex-foundling, were asked to pick a token and explain why they made this decision. Lydia Carmichael, one of the last foundlings before the hospital closed in 1954, chose a 'black hand amulet' (see figure 1).

'Figure 1 here'

Figure 1[3]

Alt Text: Image shows an amulet from the foundling Museum. The amulet is a black hand making the fig sign.

[2] See the Foundling Museums Token exhibition: foundlingmuseum.org.uk/our-art-andobjects/ foundling-collections/tokens

[3] ***A protective symbol.*** *This token depicts a hand making the 'fig sign', or* mano fica*, in which the thumb is pushed between two fingers. This ancient gesture has a wide range of meanings across the world today, ranging from good luck to a crude insult.* Mano fica *amulets like this one have been worn for protection against evil since at least ancient Roman times. In this object, the hand is show within a protective sleeve or gauntlet which continues over the wrist and shows the beginning of the forearm. Originally there was a black ribbon threaded through the hole, so the amulet could be worn.*

Through this exercise Lydia reminisces how it would have been nice if her mother had left a token for her. She also says '…it's brought to life certainly to me these children from a couple centuries ago, they're like my great, great ancestors' (Foundling Museum, 2013 n.p.). For Lydia, her chosen token creates a connection with earlier foundlings who become like family and illustrates the ways inheritance (objects and emotions) connect generations. For Care Experienced people, the private and public boundaries of inheritance, as well as the (re)*imagined* is something that needs to be untangled and investigated in both inheritance and emotions research. By looking at how Care Experienced people 'make sense of their emotional histories and inheritance' (Barnwell 2019, p. 85) we hope we have addressed this absence in some small way.

4.2 Inheritances of absence and absence of inheritance: 'Leaving a mark' or 'impression'

> 'Emotions are intentional in the sense that they are 'about' something: they involve a direction or orientation towards an object (Parkinson 1995: 8). The 'aboutness' of emotions means they involve a stance on the world, or a way of apprehending the world'
>
> Ahmed 2014, p. 7

In the sense mentioned above, inheritance has been an object towards which our participants directed or orientated their emotion. Inheritance is an emotional object for Care Experienced people because it is something that exists in *relation* to others, to families. We discovered this immediately when one of our respondents on Facebook asked: "is this a joke?", when answering our question. This 'unbearably sharp focus' (Monk 2016) on inheritance by being asked directly about it leads to feelings of resentment. As Ahmed (2014, p. 5) reminds us, 'Some theorists have described emotions as being judgements (Solomon 1995)'. The 'expression of [negative] emotion' (Bericat 2016) in the '*Is this a joke?*' response shows that this participant has made a judgement that inheritance for Care Experienced people is not something that is beneficial or something to be happy about, but something that it is insensitive to enquire about (Descartes 1985, cited in Ahmed 2014). The participant is

positioning themselves as an outsider, as absent. Barnwell's (2019) 'emotional proximities' is useful here. Not only in the sense that respondents 'described feeling distant and/or close to ancestors' they would never know (Barnwell 2019, p. 91) but, more so, that Care Experienced people feel distant or more so absent from the practice or object of inheritance. Yet, despite feeling detached from and marginalised by inheritance, Care Experienced people are affected by it, through 'an attribution of significance' (Ahmed 2014). Care Experienced people are 'emotionally implicated' (Barnwell 2019) by inheritance and there are 'emotional repercussions' (Barnwell 2019) to this practice. Such emotional experiences can 'have an impact and leave a *mark*' (Bericat 2019, p. 493) or leave an 'impression' (Ahmed 2014), which is shaped by Care Experience, history, culture, and peoples positions within a social structure and affective economy. As Monk (2014, p. 24) suggests, for 'those whose lives have been lived outside of traditional familial norms' – such as those with Care Experience – 'inheritance takes on an added significance, partly because their lives are invisible in intestacy laws, which remain firmly rooted in blood and marital status'. It is inevitable that Care Experience people have to 'feel their way through' inheritance differently to others. They have to feel their way through absence and exclusion. Yet as one our participants suggests, perhaps there are different ways of 'feeling their way through', if they could look at inheritance differently:

> I feel too many cep are bitter (perhaps rightfully so) because they've never been given anything by the blood that birthed them. But in the end an expectation of inheritance just means children grow up with a sort of nonchalant attitude to the loving act that comes from someone leaving their life to them
>
> Response from Facebook

In this reflection, we see this participant 'feeling their way through' inheritance in a more positive way to others mentioned above. The participant reflects on how the bitterness felt towards inheritance and the absent birth parents means that they overlook the greatest inheritance they get from 'the blood that birthed them': life. This suggests that Care Experienced people perhaps need to think about inheritance in alternative ways and as we show below, forge new inheritances. Negative emotions 'about something' do not necessarily have to remain 'stuck'. After all, 'There is hope, of course, as things can get unstuck' (Ahmed 2014, p. 16). In the following section we explore how these instinctive negative emotions

'transmute' (Bericat 2016), become productive and transformative to enable participants to 'do' things for themselves and others in the present and for the future.

4.3 What emotions 'Do'

In this section we continue to consider how Care Experience people 'feel their way through' inheritance and the work emotions *do*. How they work in micro ways to (re)position Care Experienced people within social and affective structures. We have found that the negative emotions expressed about inheritance at the outset of our empirical research, particularly the feeling of resentment and anger, often 'transmute' (Bericat 2019) into other emotions and ways of feeling and doing.

4.3.1 Grief and Anger: Doing for self

Swain and Musgrove (2012, p. 6) argue that 'Narratives developed within families give children a sense of continuity, of belonging to a longer story which reaches back into the past. For children who grow up within families, this narrative is preserved in oral history, photograph albums and family memorabilia, and reinforced at birthdays, anniversaries, christenings and other family occasions'. When a child enters care, there is immediate loss and displacement from familial stories and heritage. They lose those connections and with them a core component of identity. This absence often means that it is up to the child or young person to piece together jigsaw components of information to make sense of their lives. This is evident in the quote from Rosie below who recalls having to become the historian of her own life story in her search for belonging:

> I have been a lover of Agatha Christie novels since I was a teenager. This could partly be because I could and loved to work out who had dunnit! Back then I didn't even know it was the most unlikely person – there were clues if you knew how to spot them.-I spent much of my childhood mining information from those around me. This could be from social workers or members of staff talking about me behind closed doors, or my family whenever I saw them. I

> would listen to stories about Ireland, family and heritage. The insular child becoming hypervigilant, that budding detective listening out for clues. I would go so far as to say I grew an outer ear! Whenever I visited 'family' out popped the ear whilst in my mind I'd be scribbling conversations and clues. Whenever I learnt something new about my mum or family, I was so excited. I would carry the secret home adding to an imaginary family tree that I was part of. The more I knew about myself, the more I belonged, the more I had an inherited culture.
>
> Rosie 2023

This feeling of absence is often felt during childhood, but as a child grows up within care and transitions to adulthood, this loss becomes an emotion and it 'transmutes' (Bericat 2016) into grief and anger, for what you never had and for what is missing. We found this from our research:

> Would have been nice to have stories of family and history.
>
> Response from Twitter

> I don't have much of a narrative because there's no one left to tell stories.
>
> Response from Twitter

Anger 'is most often stimulated by perceived or real insult, injustice, betrayal, lack of equality, obstacles to achievement' (Schieman, 2006: 496 quoted in Bericat 2019, p. 502). This experience of 'not knowing' often places the 'care leavers at a disadvantage, acting as a form of information inequality that stigmatized and marginalized them throughout their lives (Schiller, 2013)' (Hoyle et al 2020, p. 939). Previous work has been done to explore the work emotions do in researching absence in the form of family secrets (Barnwell 2019 and Smart 2011). However, as Edwards (2017) has noted, Care Experienced people *are* the family secrets or 'absences' within their families of origin. Their very being is the secret that requires emotional work within families and their existence is treated with silence. Some Care Experienced people who conduct some sort of familial search, can be confronted with the fact

that they embody the secrets that underline their family narratives, especially if they were considered illegitimate (Edwards 2017). Some Care Experienced people have to accept that *they* are the absent memories within their families and have to 'feel their way through' and construct their identity around their absence (Edwards 2012). Seeking out biological families, often poses the risk of rejection (Barclay and Koefoed 2021, p. 6) because birth families want the secret of their existence to remain and for them to remain invisible within the family of origin. As Jensen (2020) illustrates 'even when encounters with families entail more rejection and pain, they can nonetheless provide the stories that help people understand who they are and enable them to resolve difficult pasts' (cited in Barclay and Koefoed 2021, p. 6). The below example from Edwards (2017, p. 189) of a Care Experienced person confronting their biological mother in person as a stranger for the first time demonstrates this:

> "So I said "were you ever in Belfast?" she said "oh no never, I was never in Belfast". She went to Belfast to have me you see. But I think they brain-washed them then didn't they? They didn't want that secret out to anybody that they had a baby cause they went away to places like Belfast to have the baby. So she said uh "don't worry" she says "about your mother" she says "she's with you every day". It was a weird yeah. But I thought to myself I was happy to know that like you know. So I didn't bother again".
>
> (Angie quoted in Edwards 2017, p. 189)

Here Angie's mother indicated her awareness of knowing who Angie was, and in her own way claimed Angie as her absent memory. Angie accepted this gesture and left "happy". Knowing this acknowledgement shifted her emotion towards the absent status.

Like Rosie, and others, many of the people who responded to our question often had to 'do' something and become 'historians of the self' (Murray 2009, p. 52) or as Rosie shows in the previous quote, they become 'detectives of their own life story' (Edwards and Canning 2023). The feelings of absence or gaps in their story drove them to do their own research. In many cases, this meant accessing a care file and getting 'to grips with the paper records of their lives in care' (Horrocks and Goddard 2006, p. 265). A care file is 'the intensive documentation of their childhoods' (Parton, 2008 cited in Hoyle et al 2020, p. 938) and contains 'a compilation

of observations, reports, assessments and plans that has no equivalent in family life' (Hoyle et al 2020, p. 938). As Hoyle et al (2020, p. 938), note in family settings, individuals might have reminisced with parents, siblings or other relatives - the absence of such relationships for many of the care leavers meant their records offered the fullest and most authoritative version of life events'. Here we see 'institutional records replace family as the repository of personal histories' (Swain and Musgrove 2012, p. 7). For some CEP, they inherit parts of their family story through the care records. As Hoyle et al (2020, p. 938) found access to this inheritance was sought at significant turning points in their lives, such as when leaving care, when starting a new job or retiring, being in prison or the birth of a child.

The Care Leavers Association (CLA) in the UK (an organisation run by care leavers, who support the right for all care leavers to be able to access their memories and inheritance) has found that adults who try to retrieve their files have experienced a number of problems, including: their files being lost or damaged, files with numerous redactions (suggesting that memories are still being managed by the institution); failures to respond to requests; people have been told 'you can't have your file because it will damage you' and others being asked 'why you would even want the information' as though to suggest 'one should get over it' (CLA Access to Record Campaign Group 2016, cited in in Edwards 2017, p. 186). The right to inheritance therefore can be a long-drawn-out battle for Care Experienced people. And yet for many who do eventually win access, care records have been felt as 'profoundly ambiguous' (Wilson and Golding 2016 and Hoyle et al 2020). Murphy (2010) discovered through his research on orphans in Australia that discovering one's origin can open a floodgate of emotion and as some of his participants described, can sometimes become a burden; more of a burden than the absence itself.

Sometimes when the absence remains, Care Experienced people have to negotiate it, and this can sometimes be through (re)*imagining* a story. Edwards (2017) has found this in her research where Care Experienced people imagine alternative stories and people that can help imagine their existence beyond the absence and Care Experience (Barnwell et al 2023). The use of imaginary inheritance 'can thus enable people to put some distance between themselves and their traumatic life stories and allows them to work through painful material in a less direct way' (Barnwell 2023, p. 96). For instance, in spite of the fact that many Care

Experienced people are the absent memory or secrets within their families, many have been able to develop an "attitude" (Goodall 2005) towards the absence and to the past and have been able to (re)imagine an inheritance.

We argue, that 'feeling your way' through inheritance for Care Experienced People can be rooted in the journey of finding out who they are. Through the act of (re)constructing a narrative about the self and an inheritance, they have to work to make themselves visible in the practice from which they are absent. The injustice of 'things being held back' about their inheritance (Edwards and Canning 2023) and often the subsequent *fight* to get access to some inheritance through care files means that the emotions of loss, grief and anger help to work towards doing something for the self. Many Care Experienced people engage in identity work and forge a sense of belonging. For some inheritance of this kind 'to simply keep the story for themselves or their family' (Barnwell et al 2023, p. 89). As the next section shows, as well as forging a new story about and for the self, some Care Experienced people forge new inheritances for their families.

4.3.2 Sadness and Love: Doing for Family

> I learnt to knit. So I could knit my children's children (if they have any) a baby blanket. So they knew they were loved before they were even here.
>
> Response from Twitter

The absence that comes from being Care Experienced can be something that is passed on to children and grandchildren (Edwards, 2012 and 2017). This can be the absence of stories, of people and of objects or the *feelings* attributed to the absence itself (Edwards 2017). However, in the above response to our question, we see emotion working in a way to 'do' something for a 'future' family. This example is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, feelings of sadness and love drove this participant to learn a new skill and through this new skill, they can embody their emotion, 'love' in a tangible form so that this can be 'passed on' and felt by the imagined grandchildren. Objects can represent longevity and a journey and as is demonstrated in this example, new beginnings and a way of 'doing' and 'displaying family' (Edwards and Canning 2023). We see here a more traditional (re)construction of inheritance being forged. One where

an object becomes 'freighted with significance' (Hoyle et al 2020, p. 939) and 'become[s] a key form of knowledge for' the family (Barclay and Koefoed 2021, p. 4). Secondly, this resonates with the earlier mentioned 'tokens' that mothers left with their babies when leaving them at the Foundling Hospital in the 1770s. Yet for this participant, inheritance is allowed to remain something that is private and familial, rather than as something on display or exhibited for others to see. Inheritance for Care Experienced families currently exist mostly as public testimonies and a 'lack of tangible keepsakes' (Barnwell et al 2023, p. 87). Forging new inheritances provides an opportunity to do something else and provides the *choice* 'to be recognised as something other than a Care Leaver or a victim/survivor – as Hibberd points out, opportunities that are scarce because 'their stories and identities have been assumed to be the property of public interest, media speculation and even the pursuit of justice' (Barnwell 2023, p. 81).

As well as creating new inheritances, we found that some participants carried forward objects from the time of their Care Experience, which sometimes held positive memories and emotions:

> I have two 50 yr old books from my childhood: a Superman annual and The Guinness Book of Answers by @GWR Both battered by all the moves and much treasured. One had a fun safe alternate fantasy world, the other showed me there was an interesting real world out there. I'll pass them on.
>
> Response from Twitter

Entangled in the objects that Care Experienced people create or carry with them is a beginning and a history. Such objects can simultaneously discard *and* embody their care story and be representative of a journey they have travelled together. Objects can also symbolise a new familial tradition of having and belonging with the aim of 'passing it on'. Objects can allow Care Experienced parents to do and display family. We argue here that 'feeling your way' through inheritance for Care Experienced people can also be rooted within the one thing that is most significant and yet most painful about inheritance for Care Experienced people: *family*. Even amongst the 'the stickiest, muddiest, most problem-saturated stories' (Barnwell et al 2023, p. 90), Care Experienced people can create something new or even imagine something

differently. Emotions can work in a way to transform negative feelings involved in inheritance and drive creating both intangible and tangible forms of inheritance. These emotions also work to re-position the Care Experienced person within affective and social structures of inheritance, aiding them in taking control of their inheritance practice and feelings. Care Experienced people can use inheritance to decentre trauma (Barnwell et al 2023) and care within their families. We see this repositioning not only at a self or familial level, but also for the wider Care Community.

4.3.3 Shame, Fear and Hope: Doing for others and for the future

> Identity is something we all cling onto and hold dear to ourselves. It starts with your name your ethnicity your culture and evolves and grows with you becoming part of you becoming you [but] children coming into care usually have only their name that belongs to them so to remove that too is to strip away every aspect of who they are. The child is no longer whole'
>
> McCormack 2022, p.173

These are the words of our late dear friend, Paul Yusuf McCormack, an incredible Care Experienced artist. In an article given to The Guardian, when discussing his life, work and career 'he says he did not push himself because he felt inferior to his peers. "That is the legacy of growing up in care," he says' (Horton 209, n.p). Recent research suggests that emotion itself is something that can be directly inherited (Atlas 2022). This can be within families or even within communities that have experienced trauma (Edwards 2017). The 'discoherence' (Fivush et al 2011) of inheritance and stigma of care can lead to feelings of anger, frustration and guilt and may have negative impacts on a person's sense of worth and belonging (Winter & Cohen, 2005). It can be very challenging and traumatic for young people to 'feel their way' through inheritance. Knowing this, Yusuf, used his art form to 'feel his way through' and confront the inheritance of stigma. One of Yusuf's most well-known works was *No colours for my coat*! (See figures 2 and 3).

'Figure 2 here'
'Figure 3 here'

Figure 2 Alt text: Image shows an artwork of a coat with labels attached

Figure 3 Alt text: Image shows a close up of the stigmatising labels on a work of art.

The labels of the coat represent the stigmatising and shaming, the abusive narrative he inherited. In his poem of the same name and referring to Joseph's technicoloured version; he says:

> 'But inside my pocket
> I put my own scraps of paper,
> Caught before the wind took 'em away,
> My words, my dreams,
> And I turned them over in my hand,
> "Don't define me,
> I will choose who I want to be."
>
> McCormack 2022, p. 80

There are three notable points about how Care Experienced people can 'feel their way through' inheritance in this example. Firstly, Yusuf has reclaimed his story by rejecting the inheritance of othering and shame, saying: "I recognise how I have gained a better sense of who I am and finally understand that I was never to blame." (McCormack 2022 p.154). There is a new 'attribution of significance' here, one that is more positive and to feel pride in. Secondly, we see how emotions work to shift feelings of inheritance from private back to public displays. Except in this case, it is the Care Experienced person, Yusuf, who is directing the narrative of this display and choosing to put his self, emotions and inheritance on display. By doing this he also initiates and invites others with Care Experience to 'feel their way through' together and engage in 'proactive reminiscence and collaborative memory curation [which is known to have] multiple benefits' (Hoyle et al 2020, p. 935). Group memory work

not only can creative alternative forms of inheritance, it can be a way Care Experienced people 'reclaim and redefine their own identities' (Barnwell 2023 et al p. 101) and this can lead to community building. This public display of inheritance can allow Care Experienced people to feel acknowledged and included in a practice they have felt absent from for so long. Finally, like in the previous section, Yusuf has created tangible forms of inheritance, from what has only ever been intangible, absent, silenced, hidden, stigmatised. His visceral collection of poems, art and words have become his extraordinary legacy, something that will be passed on to his children, the Care community and others. By sharing painful emotions from his past, of shame and fear, Yusuf's emotions transmute here into to hope for changing the legacy of the future. Barnwell's (2019) 'emotional proximities' is useful here again. But instead, however, of looking to those we are connected to in the past, Yusuf is looking to the future generations of young people leaving care and feeling a sense of closeness and responsibility to tackle negative emotions about the self that they may inherit. Here, Yusuf is doing the emotional work that should be done by family or even by social services. Emotion here is manifesting itself in a protest and in activism. It has 'transmuted' into hope and we see an attempt at changing the 'emotional legacy' (Barnwell 2019) that Care Experienced young people inherit. There is debate, among contemporary theorists about whether hope can be regarded as an emotion, with only a minority considering it as such (Averill et al., 1990; Lazarus, 1991, 1999; Ben-Ze'ev, 2000 and Miceli & Castelfranchi 2015). Yet the feeling of hope can defend against negative emotions and work 'as "an antidote to despair," as "a yearning for amelioration of a dreaded outcome," and as "fearing the worst but yearning for better"' for the future (Lazarus, 1991, p. 282).

We also suggest that through this inheritance practice, Yusuf is engaging in 'doing' and 'displaying' a care family. As Boddy (2019) and Gwenzi (2023) note, the concept of family is troubling for Care Experienced people, because what and who constitutes 'family' needs a 'broader understanding' (Gwenzi 2023) in order to account for 'the complex temporality of "family" for young people who have been in care' (Boddy 2019, p. 2239). But what Yusuf conveys through his inheritance creation is that the care family is not temporary, but constant. It is a type of family that has existed in the past, remains in the present and will carry on into the future. Like Lydia's recognition at the Foundling Museum, Yusuf's inheritance reminds us

that Care Experienced people are part of a much larger family and a larger history. We are also reminded that 'the memory work of care leavers can have transformative potential for national histories' (Barclay and Koefoed 2021, p. 6)

We argue here that 'feeling your way through' inheritance can sometimes be conducted as a group or community. Yusuf has shown that by 'feeling his way through' it can be possible to reclaim the negative and stigmatising narratives of care that are too often inherited by children and young people in and leaving care today. By 'feeling his way through' inheritance in art, he wants to ensure that future generations of Care Experienced young people do not grow up feeling guilt, ashamed, stigmatised or inferior because of their care identity. He wants his art, legacy and this message to be inherited by others and to collapse the boundaries of 'other' and absence to empower 'young people and care leavers to take control of their own stories' (Hoyle et al 2020, p. 943). We can argue that 'emotions [practiced in inheritance] are active in constructing relations and determining proximities' (Barnwell 2019, p. 89 citing Probyn and Mason) intergenerationally between the Care community.

Conclusion

Given the strong correlation with 'family practice' we have argued that inheritance can be attributed as a source of feeling. In other words, inheritance is something that is felt and can be considered as an 'emotional practice'. Our participation in the *Inheriting Family* workshops and previous work (Edwards and Canning 2023) allowed us to consider inheritance as something that was the source of emotional work for Care Experienced people. So, one way of analysing this emotional work was through the 'affective structure and emotional dynamics' (Bericat 2016, p. 491) of inheritance. Inheritance can open 'up our capacity to consider what work emotions *do'* (Barnwell 2019, p. 82) for Care Experienced people. The aim of this article was to explore how Care Experienced people 'feel their way through' inheritance (Ahmed 2014). The emotions of Care Experienced people have become 'psychologised' (White 1993). In our research, we consider the 'sociality of emotion' (Ahmed 2014) – meaning that we saw emotion as something that is social (Hochschild 2019), relational (Burkitt, 2002, 2014; de Rivera and Grinkis, 1986) and exists in the context of social relations and social structures. We

saw Care Experienced people as 'feeling subjects' and understood that 'emotions emerge, are experienced and have meaning in the context of our social relations' (Bericat 2016, p. 495). As Olson et al (2020, p. 158) argue, 'Emotions do not need to be understood from a singular set of ontological and epistemological assumptions'. Instead, we found that gathering and triangulating evidence which exists in different formats and places *with* first-hand accounts from Care Experienced people allowed us to develop a comprehensive understanding of how Care Experienced People 'feel their way through' inheritance. Our methodology allowed us to centre and position the emotions and *voices* of Care Experienced people alongside 'official' sites of knowledge, thereby empowering us to do research with the Care Experienced community rather than on them.

Our initial finding was that Care Experienced people initially feel resentful or bitter towards the idea of inheritance. However, we found that these negative expressions of emotions can become 'unstuck'. Whilst marginalised within orthodox inheritance practices, Care Experienced people can derive new forms and ways of creating and 'doing' inheritance from the emotions associated with being absent from and 'othered' by inheritance practices. We found that inheritance can be (re)imagined. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's (2004, p. 4) question: 'What do emotions do?', we have shown that Care Experienced people 'feel their way through' and 'do' different things with the emotions they attribute to inheritance. Some 'feel their way through' as part of their identity work, as part of their 'capacity for self-knowledge' (Hoyle et al 2020). Others have 'felt their way through' as part of a family or as part of a larger care community. This shows that Care Experienced people who are denied their inheritance, actively seek ways to forge an inheritance for their future descendants, whether that be for members of their family or for the wider care community. Feeling their way through inheritance can be transformative.

Finally, we want to end this article with two key messages. We have begun to explore how 'emotional experiences happen over time' (Bericat 2016, p. 505), but instead of looking to the past, we considered what emotions do for the future. This should be a focus for future research and in particular Care Experienced people should be asked about their inheritance practices. Our own inheritances, those that we have read and those of our participants contain

stories of trauma, loss and absence. But we also found inheritance being used as a way to create new beginnings, and this warrants further attention in inheritance and emotion research, policy and in national heritage settings. Finally, the creativity that Care Experienced people have shown in negotiating practices of inheritance should not overshadow the *rights* that Care Experienced people should have to their inheritance, whether that is accessing their care file or being supported to forge their own inheritance for their own families in an ethical way. When inheritance is held back it creates absences in people's narratives and this results in many Care Experienced people trying to put together information about their lives 'in unsupported ways that put them at risk of experiencing trauma', (Edwards 2022, n.p) and this should *never* be the case for any Care Experienced person and their families.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the Care Experienced people who responded to our call on social media. Thank you all for sharing your thoughts and experiences with us. We could not have written this without you. Secondly thank you to all at the Inheriting the Family' network and in particular the editors of this special issue for seeing importance in our work. Finally, we would also like to thank each of the anonymous reviewers of this article, your feedback was encouraging, supportive and constructive.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the Care Experienced people who responded to our call on social media. Thank you all for sharing your thoughts and experiences with us. We could not have written this without you. Secondly thank you to all at the Inheriting the Family' network and in particular the editors of this special issue for seeing importance in our work. Finally, we would also like to thank each of the anonymous reviewers of this article, your feedback was encouraging, supportive and constructive.

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