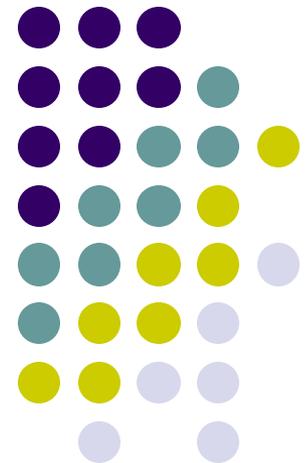
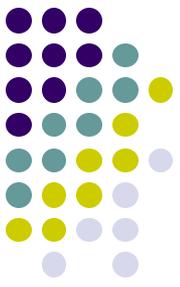


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*Catherine Kelly*  
*Leanne Greenwood*  
*Holly Craggs*



**Creating a sense of school belonging for  
vulnerable pupils - how are we doing?  
Pupil perspectives and staff perspectives**



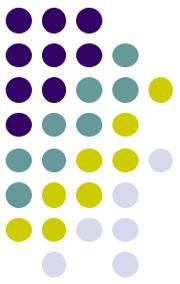
# Sense of belonging

- A psychological drive to belong to groups
- An innate human need

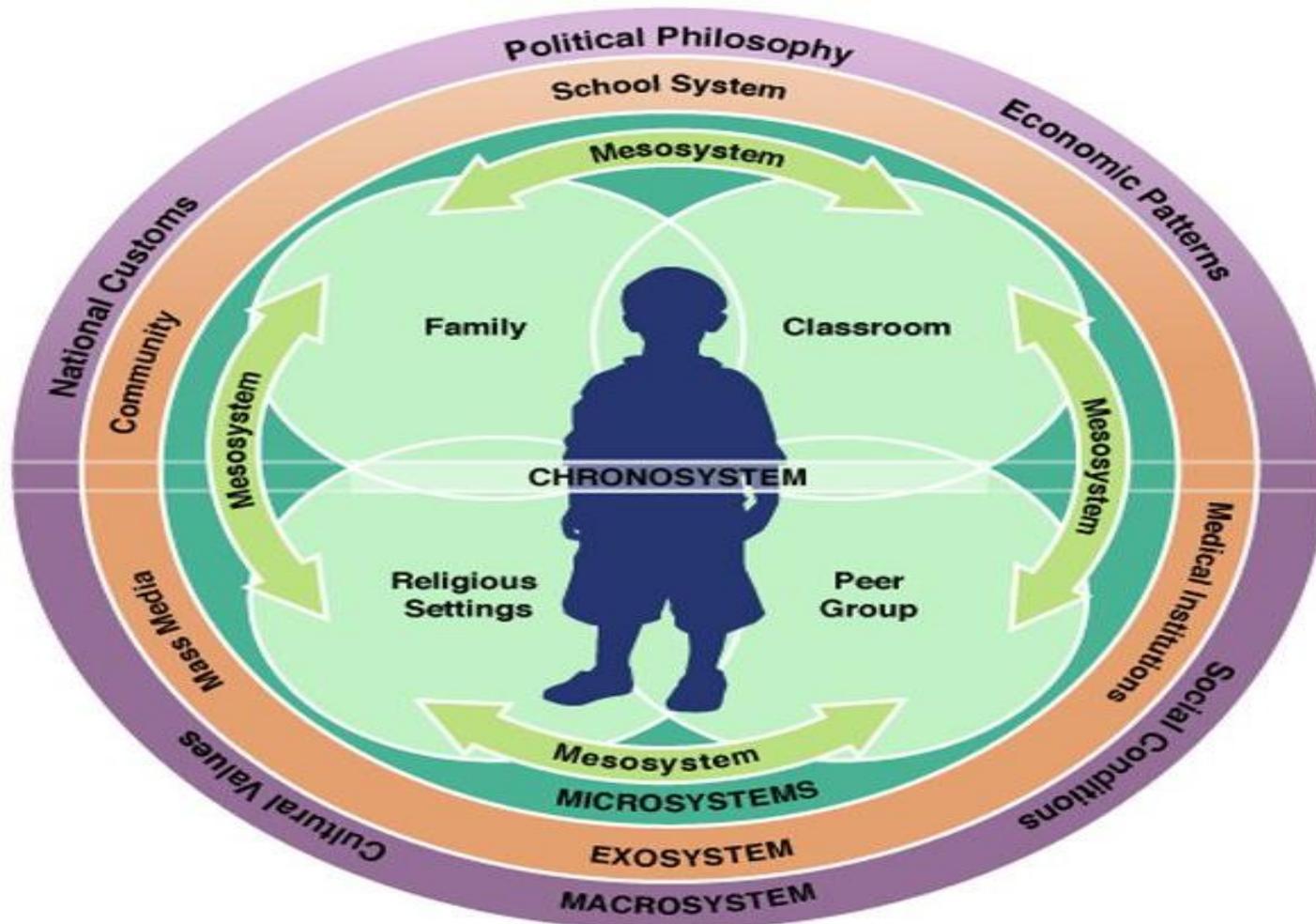
## A sense of school belonging

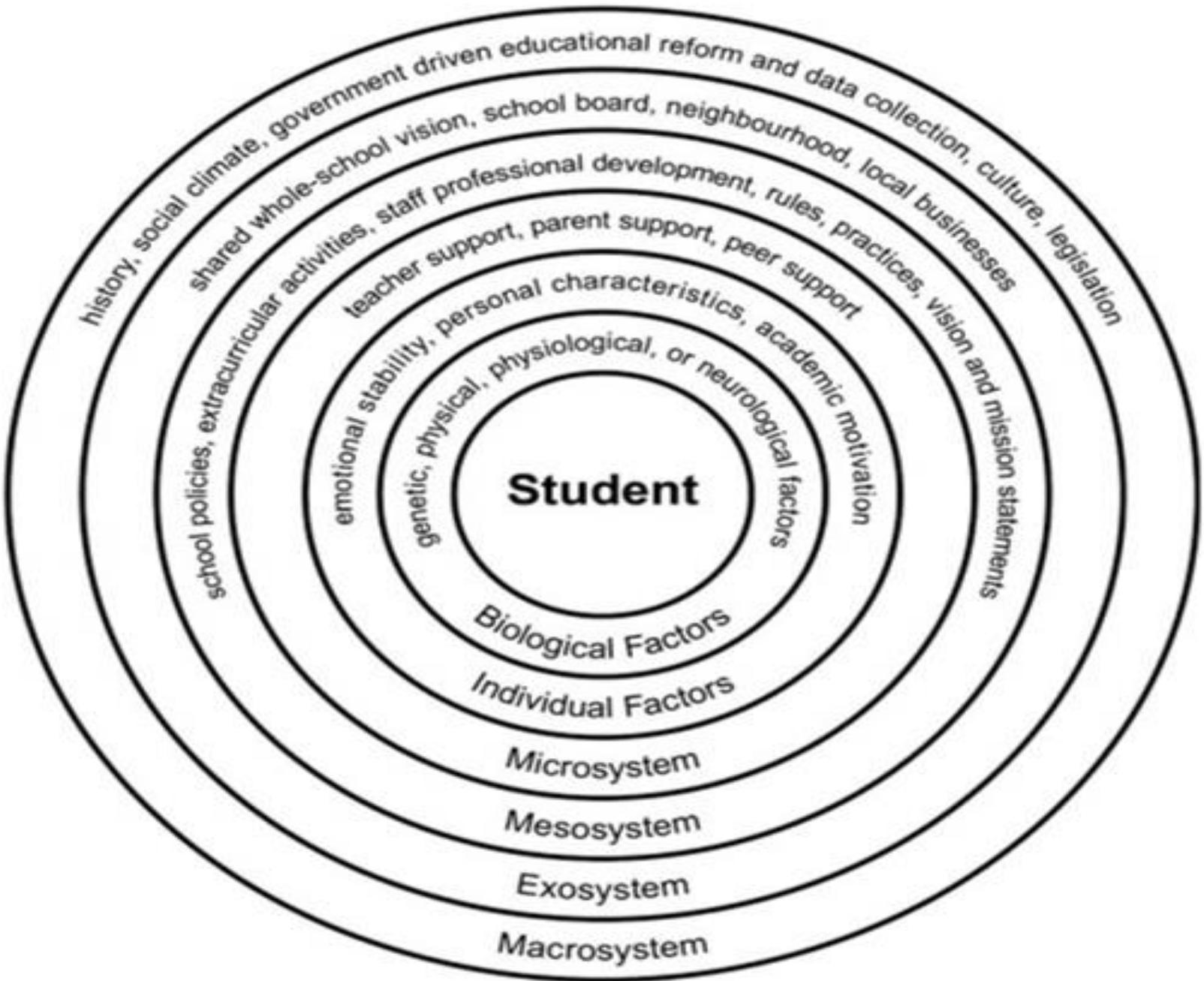
- Pupils are more motivated, engaged and dedicated to their education
- What helps to create a sense of school belonging for pupils?

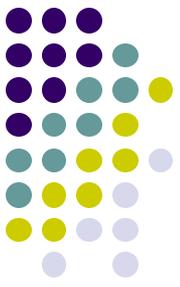
# Influences on children's development



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Child Development







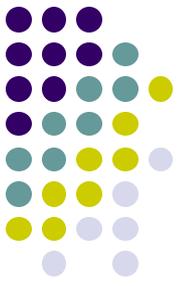
## ***Two literature reviews:***

- Adolescents' experiences of school belonging: a qualitative meta-synthesis
- A systematic literature review to explore how staff in schools describe how a sense of belonging is created for their pupils.

## ***Two empirical studies:***

- School belonging: Listening to the voices of secondary school students who have undergone managed moves
- Using Appreciative Inquiry to support Looked After Children develop a sense of belonging when they experience an atypical in-year transition to a new school.

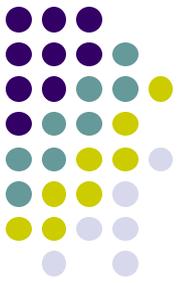
# Adolescents' experiences of school belonging



A sense of belonging is suggested to be particularly important during the changing priorities and expectations of adolescence (Allen and Kern 2017).

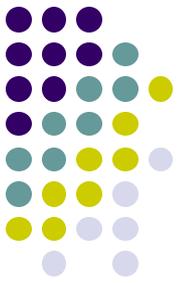
So what does research tells us about how adolescents themselves experience school belonging?

# Qualitative metasynthesis



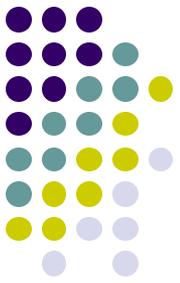
- Cross-disciplinary
- Integrative
- Interpretative

# Synthesizing the studies



- Only a small number of studies (8)
- Studies derived from four countries: UK (3); USA (3); Australia (1) and Sweden (1), involving 138 participants in total, with study sample sizes ranging from 5 to 44
- Contextually diverse
- Nevertheless, conceptual similarities in the way adolescents' experiences of school belonging were presented across the studies

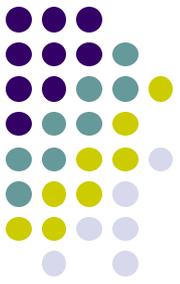
# Common concepts



School belonging was experienced by the adolescents in the included studies as:

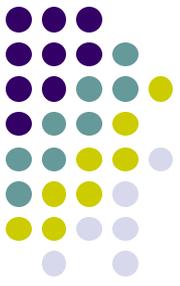
- an intersubjective and relational phenomenon
- linked with knowledge and acceptance of individual identity by the school community
- associated with specific experiences of in-group membership
- related to feelings of safety and security

# Adolescents' sense of school belonging



‘feeling safe to be yourself in and through relationships with others in the school setting’

# How do staff in high schools describe how schools address pupils' needs to experience belonging?



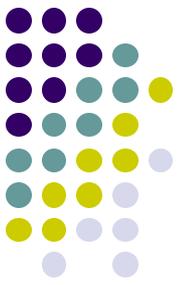
Support offered by individual staff within school

- Teacher connection
- Personal and academic support

Support offered on a more systemic level, via school routines and procedures.

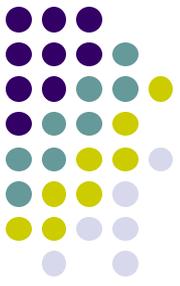
- School culture and community
- Links to other stakeholders.
- Classroom provision
- Preparation and support for transition

# How do staff in high schools describe how schools address pupils' needs to experience belonging?



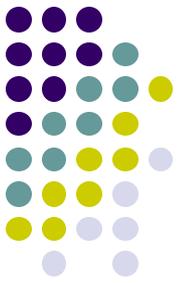
- Implications for practice
  - Staff-pupil relationships
  - Whole school approaches for supporting well-being and mental health
  - Promoting school belonging through influencing peer relationships?

# School belonging: Listening to the voices of secondary school students who have undergone managed moves



- Managed move protocols - a positive alternative?
- Research suggests greater personalization needed
- Research questions:
  - How do secondary school students who have undergone a managed move experience school belonging?
  - What did they feel helped them to experience a sense of school belonging following their managed moves?

# Method



- Participants: 4 managed move pupils who had been attending their receiver schools for a period of at least six weeks; no ongoing CAMHS involvement
- Individual phenomenological interviews (collaborative interviews with an unforced flow of questions (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013, p. 221; p. 359) were conducted with each participant. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

# Findings



School belonging for managed move pupils was associated with:

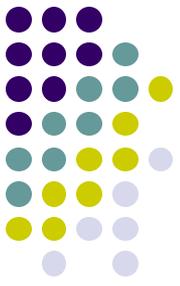
- **Making friends** and feeling safe
- Feeling known, understood and accepted as a person in receiver school
- Appropriate and timely provision of support for any additional needs
- Supportive/unsupportive school-based protocols/practices

# Implications for practice



- Importance of leveraging ‘everyday’ opportunities - e.g.
  - Staff taking low-key steps to promote friendships
  - Staff showing curiosity about and encouraging participants’ individual skills and interests - possibly through extra-curricular activities
- Timely support for additional needs
- Avoiding protocols which make pupils feel that they are ‘on trial’

# Developing a sense of belonging when looked after children experience an atypical in-year transition to a new school.

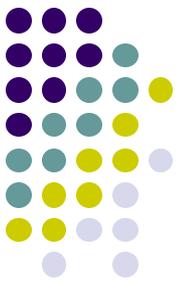


Action research using Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

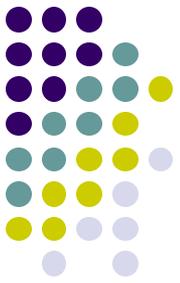
- Virtual school staff
- A group of looked after young people
- Atypical in-year transition
- Focus-group
- Collaborative analysis

- Discovery -  
***Exploring what 'is'***
  - Being eased into lessons
  - Teacher and pupil support
  - Buddy systems
  - Uniform and school work
  - *Voice of the child*
  - *Planning and bespoke support*
  - *Leaving parties, visits to new school, scripts*

- Dream –  
***Imagining what 'could be'***
  - Supportive friends
  - Teachers full-names and room numbers
  - School layout and Ofsted information
  - *Adapt to needs of pupil*
  - *Time and space to explore new school – photos*
  - *Purchasing uniform*

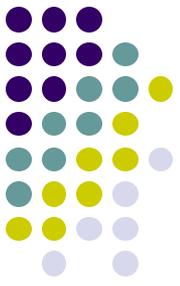


# Action research



- Design - ***Determining what ‘should be’***
  - Developing friendships is important to us
  - We have someone we trust to visit our new school with
  - We have a positive and personalised induction to our new school
  - We have at least one key person we can build a trusting relationship with

# Action research



- **Destiny - *Creating what 'will be'***

*Implications for individual casework*

- *Nurture friendships*
- *Stick to the plan*
- *Social skills work*

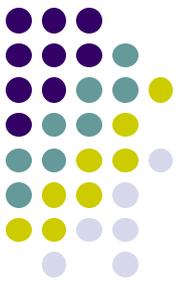
*Implications for capacity building within schools*

- *Key person*
- *Educate about friendships*
- *APDR cycles*
- *CPD*

# Action research



- Impact of AI
  - Supports collaborative practice – pupils and adults
  - Useful tool to evaluate practice and identify areas for development
  - *‘well worth the time... it was a quality piece of work with realistic, practical outcomes which have impacted directly on our pupils’*



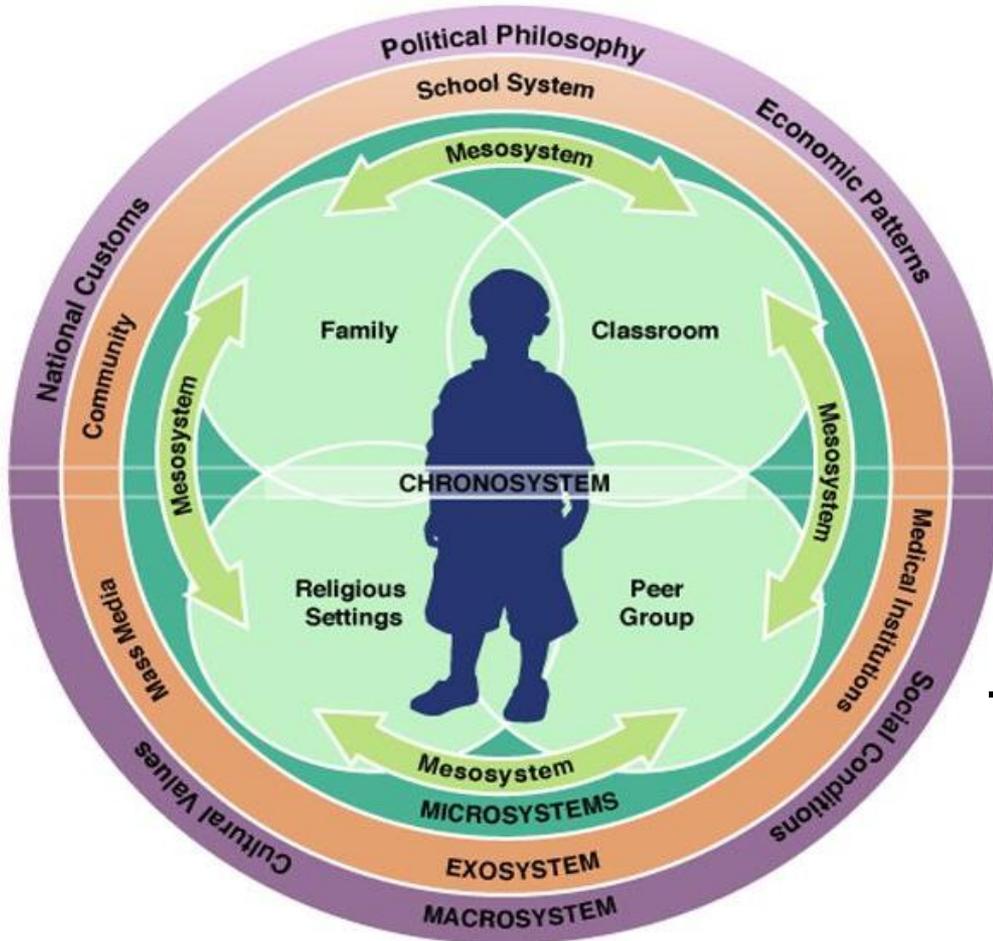
# Summary

- Feeling known, understood and accepted
- Relationships with adults and friendships
- Being part of a group
- Feeling safe

# Creating a sense of school belonging



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Child Development



Thank you for listening!

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